



## Expanding Social Security

These benefits are essential to all who rely on them, including seniors, people with disabilities and families of deceased workers.

Today 65 million Americans – one out of every five households – relies on Social Security's lifetime, guaranteed benefits.

To continue to provide retirement security for current and future generations, it is time to strengthen and expand Social Security and increase benefits. Many members of Congress recognize the need for action and are proposing legislation that will ensure the Social Security system remains strong and Americans receive the benefits they have earned.

### Alliance for Retired Americans Position

The Alliance for Retired Americans strongly supports federal legislation that increases Social Security benefits, extends the solvency of the Social Security Trust Fund, and repeals the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO).

We believe the practical and fair way to accomplish this is to lift the cap on Social Security payroll taxes above the current \$160,200 and require that wealthy Americans pay their fair share of taxes into the system.

Each of the bills described below would strengthen Social Security in important ways.

### S. 393, H.R. 1046: The Social Security Expansion Act

This legislation, introduced by Senator Bernie Sanders (D-VT), in the Senate and Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) in the House, expands Social Security and increases benefits by requiring that wealthy Americans pay their fair share.

This legislation extends the solvency of Social Security for 75 years by lifting the cap and subjecting all income above \$250,000 to the Social Security payroll tax.

The bill increases the Cost-of-Living-Adjustments to more accurately measure the spending patterns for seniors by adopting the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly (CPI-E). It also expands Social Security benefits across the board for current and new beneficiaries, increasing benefits by \$200 per month.

Moreover, it improves the Special Minimum Benefit for Social Security recipients, restores student benefits up to age 22 for children of disabled or deceased workers, and combines the Disability Insurance Trust Fund with the Old Age and Survivors Trust Fund so that all Americans receive the benefits they have earned.

## **H.R. 671: The Social Security Enhancement and Protection Act**

This legislation, introduced by Rep. Gwen Moore (D-WI), makes key reforms to strengthen and improve program benefits to augment Social Security's ability to protect vulnerable Americans living in poverty. The bill accomplishes this by eliminating the cap on Social Security payroll contributions, while also improving the program's special minimum benefit to better support low-income workers. And while recognizing that providing child care is hard work, it allows the years in which a parent provides care for a young child to count as a year of coverage for determining an individual's Social Security benefits.

Additionally, the legislation reinstates benefits for students up to age 26 who are children of retired, deceased, or disabled workers, and increases benefits for all beneficiaries 20 years after retirement, providing economic stability to the eldest among our nation's senior population.

## **H.R. 82 and S. 597: The Social Security Fairness Act**

This bill, introduced by Rep. Garret Graves (R-LA) and Rep. Abigail Spanberger (D-VA), in the House and by Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) in the Senate, repeals the GPO and the WEP.

The WEP affects nearly two million public sector retirees with public pensions, while the GPO reduces by two-thirds the spousal or survivor benefits of nearly 800,000 retirees who collect a public pension. These are outdated provisions that deprive educators and other public employees of the benefits they have earned and the secure retirement they deserve. Moreover, eliminating the WEP and GPO would also serve as a tremendous financial boost not only to seniors but for the United States' economy overall, given that seniors support tens of millions of jobs and contribute trillions of dollars annually to the nation's economy.

## **H.R. 814: The Protect Social Security and Medicare Act**

This legislation, introduced by Rep. Mark Pocan (D-WI), raises the vote threshold and requires a two-thirds supermajority vote to pass any legislation that would reduce benefits in either the Social Security or Medicare programs.

## **S. 1174: The Medicare and Social Security Fair Share Act**

Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) introduced legislation that extends the solvency of Social Security and Medicare by 20 years while augmenting fairness in the tax system by increasing the share that taxpayers earning over \$400,000 in income contribute (regardless of the source of their income). The bill also requires that taxpayers with incomes above \$400,000 contribute more to Medicare, while closing a legal loophole that favors high earners, mimicking President Biden's budget proposal. This legislation levels the playing field so that the vast majority of Americans will not continue paying a much larger percentage of their income for these programs than the wealthiest Americans.

## S. 1211: The Social Security Caregivers Act

Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT), introduced legislation that allows caregivers to receive a Social Security credit and provides retirement compensation in the form of credits to individuals who left the workforce to care for loved ones. The credit in the legislation is added to an individual's earnings to calculate their future Social Security benefits. To qualify, caregivers must provide care for a minimum of 80 hours per month to a loved one who cannot perform daily activities without assistance.

## The Safeguarding American Families and Expanding (SAFE) Social Security Act

Senator Brian Schatz (D-HI) has announced his intention to introduce the SAFE Social Security Act, a bill which increases Social Security benefits by \$125 per month across the board. The legislation will also ensure that cost of living adjustments adequately reflect the living expenses of retirees, extend the life of the Social Security Trust Fund, and remove the wage cap to ensure all Americans contribute equally to the system.

Key benefits of the legislation include:

- Phasing out the payroll tax cap so that payroll taxes apply fairly to every dollar of wages earned;
- Updating the annual COLA to better reflect the real costs that seniors face through the use of the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly;
- Guaranteeing a new minimum benefit so that lower income seniors receive enough to survive;
- Rewarding caregiving by providing a credit toward future Social Security payments;
- Ensuring that any increase in benefits would not harm an individual's eligibility or cause a reduction in their Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medicaid or CHIP benefits;
- Eliminating the waiting period for disability insurance and surviving spousal benefits;