



Fact Sheet

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Senate Democrats Are On Your Side Fighting to Protect Social Security

When it comes to retirement security, the contrast is clear: Democrats know that Social Security is a promise that must never be broken – a program that you have earned and paid for with a lifetime of hard work – while Republicans are threatening once again to privatize and cut your Social Security—turning it over to Wall Street.

Democrats are committed to protecting Social Security from those who oppose the program and want to privatize it or phase it out altogether. Privatization would force deep benefit cuts and a massive increase in debt, while putting benefits at the mercy of Wall Street and taking the security out of Social Security.

While Social Security faces long-term challenges that must be addressed, it is not in crisis. The Congressional Budget Office says that, even if no improvements are made to Social Security's long-range financing, it can pay every penny of benefits for nearly 30 years. And, after that it can pay larger benefits than seniors receive today, even after accounting for inflation.

Key Facts

Social Security is more important than ever. Signed into law 75 years ago, Social Security was created at a time when the American economy had crumbled and was struggling to recover. Now, without Social Security, nearly half of Americans age 65 and older would live in poverty. Instead, millions of Americans can live their lives with dignity and independence.

- **Over 52 million Americans receive Social Security benefits.**

This includes more than 90 percent of our seniors. One in three beneficiaries is not a senior citizen, but instead a surviving spouse or child of a deceased breadwinner, a dependent spouse or child, or a person with disabilities. About 6.5 million children under 18 - nearly 9 percent of all U.S. children – received part of their family income from Social Security in 2005. [Social Security Administration, [8/5/09](#); Alliance for Retired Americans, [7/10](#)]

- **The average retiree benefit in 2010: \$14,000.**

The median income for senior households is a mere \$24,000 – reflecting just how much Social Security means to most American seniors. Social Security provides the majority of income for two-thirds of our elderly. For one-third, it provides nearly all their income. [Alliance for Retired Americans, [7/10](#)]

- **Social Security is self-financing and does not take money from the general fund of the Federal budget.**

The Congressional Budget Office projects that Social Security will remain solvent until 2039, after which incoming payroll taxes will be able to pay 80 percent of promised benefits – which will be more in real terms than today’s benefits. [CBO, [7/10](#)]

The Social Security Trust Fund now includes about \$2.5 trillion of Treasury securities, all backed by the full faith and credit of the United States. [Alliance for Retired Americans, [7/10](#)]

All Social Security benefits are paid from the Social Security Trust Fund or incoming payroll taxes, not the General Fund. By law, the trust fund is entirely off-budget, and Social Security cannot borrow from the General Fund to pay benefits.

Frequently Asked Questions

What’s your plan to save Social Security?

Senate Democrats are committed to –

- **Honor our obligations:** While many are scared that Social Security won’t be there for them, if we just honor our obligations to Social Security, as we always have, the program can pay all promised benefits for nearly 30 years;
- **Do no harm:** Save the program from those who want to privatize it or phase it out altogether;
- **Crack down on cheaters,** who cost Social Security about \$50 billion a year; and
- **Bipartisan negotiations:** Work in a bipartisan manner to make the modest adjustments necessary to ensure long-term solvency.

What’s wrong with privatization?

Plenty –

- **Privatization would cut benefits:** Privatization would divert money from the trust fund and force deep benefit cuts in the future. President Bush’s plan would have cut benefits by one-third or more;
- **It is too risky to base Social Security benefits on the stock market:** At one point in 2008, the Dow had declined 40 percent; and
- **Privatization would add massive debt:** Bush’s plan would have required \$5 trillion in new debt over the first 20 years. [CBPP, [2/7/05](#)]

Isn't Social Security unaffordable in the long run?

No. To provide some perspective, over the next 75 years it would cost more to extend all the upper-income tax cuts (0.7 percent of GDP in present value) than to close the entire Social Security shortfall (0.6 percent of GDP). By comparison, the cost of extending all the Bush tax cuts (2.1 percent of GDP) is more than three times the Social Security shortfall. [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities calculations based on CBO, OMB, and JCT data and the 2009 Social Security and Medicare Trustees Reports]

Should undocumented immigrants get Social Security?

Contrary to some claims, under current law, undocumented immigrants already are prohibited from receiving Social Security benefits.

State-by-State Stats: Number of beneficiaries

State	Total	Retired workers	Disabled workers	Widow(er)s	Spouses	Children
Alabama	983,341	543,725	204,573	91,034	42,103	101,906
Alaska	74,678	46,498	11,572	5,126	2,807	8,675
Arizona	1,028,442	693,216	138,396	76,096	46,043	74,691
Arkansas	620,040	352,317	128,375	52,593	24,568	62,187
California	4,835,164	3,182,221	639,263	383,550	268,296	361,834
Colorado	663,894	443,673	87,987	53,252	32,788	46,194
Connecticut	611,276	428,877	74,153	43,845	21,551	42,850
Delaware	167,530	111,912	24,937	12,258	5,984	12,439
DC	73,093	47,343	11,948	5,471	1,794	6,537
Florida	3,669,375	2,536,392	458,526	277,117	161,506	235,834
Georgia	1,412,978	872,059	236,868	117,937	51,861	134,253
Hawaii	220,491	160,553	21,698	15,485	8,376	14,379
Idaho	258,691	169,173	36,525	20,104	12,938	19,951
Illinois	1,993,199	1,306,280	262,227	176,524	88,786	159,382
Indiana	1,157,821	735,047	175,035	100,522	49,436	97,781
Iowa	574,315	388,139	68,425	52,462	27,606	37,683
Kansas	478,138	314,968	65,631	40,996	20,196	36,347
Kentucky	870,206	461,223	190,170	86,110	44,837	87,866
Louisiana	770,217	401,165	135,077	94,302	51,753	87,920
Maine	293,011	180,317	53,959	22,685	12,144	23,906
Maryland	826,497	555,790	108,605	66,708	31,428	63,966
Massachusetts	1,117,870	724,674	179,409	82,792	41,230	89,765
Michigan	1,905,342	1,194,623	293,299	164,633	91,400	161,387
Minnesota	857,805	584,560	109,472	68,615	37,367	57,791
Mississippi	583,515	318,734	121,217	52,139	21,746	69,679
Missouri	1,137,581	707,487	190,813	95,774	46,065	97,442
Montana	187,197	123,975	24,865	15,886	9,264	13,207
Nebraska	303,880	203,762	38,133	26,866	14,022	21,097
Nevada	390,553	269,889	52,776	26,345	14,396	27,147
New Hampshire	245,563	161,891	39,678	16,032	7,988	19,974
New Jersey	1,440,943	995,695	176,927	110,859	54,287	103,175
New Mexico	347,976	213,959	55,815	29,048	18,944	30,210
New York	3,214,780	2,100,332	470,783	248,238	138,038	257,389
North Carolina	1,698,677	1,082,726	296,118	126,002	54,127	139,704
North Dakota	118,493	76,872	12,872	13,412	7,660	7,677
Ohio	2,074,384	1,291,578	291,040	215,198	117,162	159,406

State	Total	Retired workers	Disabled workers	Widow(er)s	Spouses	Children
Oklahoma	688,545	419,458	114,708	63,181	31,301	59,897
Oregon	686,777	467,560	91,803	54,020	31,000	42,394
Pennsylvania	2,530,211	1,641,934	352,884	233,228	115,337	186,828
Rhode Island	200,202	133,026	32,963	13,419	5,578	15,216
South Carolina	889,876	556,444	156,502	69,929	29,571	77,430
South Dakota	150,432	101,648	16,866	14,168	7,741	10,009
Tennessee	1,212,968	730,711	217,950	105,359	50,506	108,442
Texas	3,320,462	1,995,282	499,728	324,886	197,421	303,145
Utah	312,029	203,464	39,318	22,829	17,617	28,801
Vermont	124,585	80,961	19,567	9,409	4,883	9,765
Virginia	1,246,366	799,184	190,962	103,562	52,589	100,069
Washington	1,049,039	698,822	150,080	80,041	49,621	70,475
West Virginia	436,445	225,811	91,273	49,293	29,253	40,815
Wisconsin	1,033,096	697,097	137,596	82,691	41,107	74,605
Wyoming	88,514	59,708	11,312	7,225	4,034	6,235

SOURCE: House Committee on Ways and Means compilation of data from the Social Security Administration, Office of Retirement and Disability Policy, Congressional Statistics 2009, available [here](#).

State-by-State Stats: Monthly Benefits

State	All beneficiaries (thousands of dollars)	Retired workers (thousands of dollars)	Average Benefit
Alabama	995,047	614,516	\$1,130
Alaska	75,477	51,652	\$1,110
Arizona	1,130,429	824,221	\$1,188
Arkansas	611,114	386,561	\$1,097
California	5,157,177	3,682,640	\$1,157
Colorado	709,615	509,759	\$1,148
Connecticut	723,023	546,727	\$1,274
Delaware	191,920	138,475	\$1,237
DC	70,001	49,127	\$1,037
Florida	3,958,307	2,936,441	\$1,157
Georgia	1,475,429	998,499	\$1,144
Hawaii	238,128	184,953	\$1,151
Idaho	270,393	192,169	\$1,135
Illinois	2,205,859	1,569,838	\$1,201
Indiana	1,288,870	900,026	\$1,224
Iowa	616,526	450,416	\$1,160
Kansas	522,873	375,211	\$1,191
Kentucky	861,173	511,086	\$1,108
Louisiana	745,801	436,365	\$1,087
Maine	289,594	194,614	\$1,079
Maryland	914,615	662,096	\$1,191
Massachusetts	1,207,840	851,453	\$1,174
Michigan	2,175,484	1,502,388	\$1,257
Minnesota	938,896	691,140	\$1,182
Mississippi	564,156	346,176	\$1,086
Missouri	1,192,370	812,763	\$1,148
Montana	192,091	137,196	\$1,106
Nebraska	321,811	233,605	\$1,146
Nevada	428,178	314,915	\$1,166
New Hampshire	272,608	195,479	\$1,207
New Jersey	1,719,218	1,280,706	\$1,286
New Mexico	344,768	233,349	\$1,090
New York	3,602,818	2,571,969	\$1,224
North Carolina	1,798,292	1,250,210	\$1,154
North Dakota	118,640	83,383	\$1,084
Ohio	2,215,149	1,514,080	\$1,172

State	All beneficiaries (thousands of dollars)	Retired workers (thousands of dollars)	Average Benefit
Oklahoma	704,557	470,875	\$1,122
Oregon	750,210	547,455	\$1,170
Pennsylvania	2,788,542	1,970,246	\$1,199
Rhode Island	215,857	155,567	\$1,169
South Carolina	942,226	643,622	\$1,156
South Dakota	150,908	110,086	\$1,083
Tennessee	1,257,202	837,850	\$1,146
Texas	3,400,596	2,263,541	\$1,134
Utah	334,190	238,908	\$1,174
Vermont	131,815	94,167	\$1,163
Virginia	1,332,677	930,638	\$1,164
Washington	1,172,821	845,946	\$1,210
West Virginia	448,604	259,271	\$1,148
Wisconsin	1,140,891	833,550	\$1,195
Wyoming	95,541	69,373	\$1,161

SOURCE: House Committee on Ways and Means compilation of data from the Social Security Administration, Office of Retirement and Disability Policy, Congressional Statistics 2009, available [here](#).