



Resolution: Supplemental Security Income

Adopted September 6, 2006

Whereas the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program provides basic safety net protection for over 7 million low-income aged, blind, and disabled adults and children with few resources; and

Whereas the eligibility requirements have not been updated for several years weakening the program's effectiveness in alleviating poverty; and

Whereas the federal benefit rate for an individual in 2006 is \$579 per month, which is 27 percent below the official poverty level; and

Whereas the general income exclusion of \$20 per month and the earned income exclusion of \$65 per month have not increased since 1972, and the resources/assets limits of \$2,000 for individuals and \$3,000 for couples have not been updated since 1989; and

Whereas approximately 54 percent of SSI beneficiaries have no other source of income besides their SSI benefits; and

Whereas only 1.4 percent of SSI recipients aged 65 and older earn any other income; and

Whereas approximately 850,000 persons age 65 and older receive SSI only and no Social Security benefits; and

Whereas many legal immigrants otherwise eligible for SSI are excluded because of the 1996 welfare reform law; and

Whereas due to an array of problems regarding SSI's relationship to other social welfare programs, administration of the program is complex and needs simplification and increased outreach; and

Whereas only 6 in 10 of all seniors eligible for SSI are currently receiving benefits; and

Whereas a panel of experts in 1992 recommended important improvements to the program but little action has been taken to implement those suggested improvements.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Alliance for Retired Americans supports policies that: Modernize the Supplemental Security Income program by implementing the following recommendations:

- Increase the federal benefit standard to at least 120 percent of the poverty level;
- Discontinue counting in-kind support as income;
- Increase the general income and earned income exclusions;
- Increase asset/resource limits and index increases to inflation;
- Restore SSI benefits to all legal immigrants whose status would have entitled them to benefits prior to the 1996 welfare reform law;
- Develop and fund an effective outreach program; and
- Increase Social Security Administration staffing to administer the current program more effectively and to make the proposed improvements.

The Alliance for Retired Americans is a nationwide organization of three million union retirees and other older and retired Americans working together to make their voices heard in the laws, policies, politics and institutions that shape our lives.

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