Rubio, Kasich Respond to Alliance Questions about Social Security and Medicare Cuts

Alliance activists are engaging the presidential candidates on the stump, and the most recent instances involved Sen. Marco Rubio and Governor John Kasich in New Hampshire.

Sen. Rubio would raise the retirement age for Social Security and privatize Medicare, he told supporters in Henniker, New Hampshire last Friday. Referring to Social Security and Medicare, he said, “We’re not going to disrupt it for the people that are on it now,” but that “Medicare and Social Security is (sic) going to look different for me and for the young people here than it does for our parents.”

That same day, in Claremont, New Hampshire, Sen. Rubio responded to a question from Jennifer Kenny, Senior Field Organizer for the New England Region of the Alliance for Retired Americans. At that event he also stated his plans to privatize Medicare.

“Sen. Rubio refers to his own plans for Social Security and Medicare as a “disruption’, but that’s an understatement,” said Alliance President Robert Roach, Jr. “The Alliance would like our leaders to take the country in a very different direction: expand earned Social Security benefits and protect Medicare’s guaranteed benefits from cuts.”

Ms. Kenny questioned Governor Kasich while he was campaigning in New Hampshire on Wednesday.
Income Inequality is Drastically Affecting Social Security’s Solvency

If nothing changes, Social Security will generate enough revenue to pay for three-quarters of promised benefits over the next 75 years. Despite massive income inequality, that is not as ominous as many would have us believe. However, a recent Atlantic magazine column by Dr. Teresa Ghilarducci, a professor of economic policy analysis at the New School for Social Research in New York, suggests we could do better.

Dr. Ghilarducci writes that the formula for funding Social Security was calibrated when our country had much less inequality than it currently has. Since 1979, the wages of the top 1% of workers have grown 138%, while the wages for the bottom 90% grew only 15%.

This statistic has significant implications for Social Security, since taxing all of that income growth evenly would leave Social Security with no shortfall at all.

Any dollar that an American earns beyond $118,500 is not currently subject to Social Security taxes. Someone who makes $118,500 this year is going to pay the same amount in Social Security taxes as someone who makes millions more than that – and much more, as a percentage of their salary.

To address this unfairness, the Alliance supports the Safeguarding American Families and Expanding Social Security Act, S. 1940, which was introduced in the U.S. Senate by Senator Brian Schatz (D-HI). This legislation would change the cost of living adjustment formula (COLA) to better reflect the needs of older Americans. Current beneficiaries would be expected to see their Social Security benefits increase by an average of $65 per month.

But that’s not all this bill would do. This legislation would address income inequality by lifting the cap on income subject to the Social Security tax (currently at $118,500), so it would also extend the life of the trust fund for decades into the future. Other bills would also expand earned Social Security benefits by scrapping the cap.

“Billionaires are not paying the same share into Social Security as those on the bottom rungs of the economic ladder,” said Joseph Peters, Jr., Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “The Schatz bill would correct that.”

Hospitals are working to Prevent Seniors from Falling

Falls are the leading cause of injuries for adults 65 and older, and 2.5 million of them end up in hospital emergency rooms for treatment every year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That is why hospitals are working to prevent the falls from occurring.

The results of a fall can range from bruises, fractured hips and head injuries to irreversible calamities that even lead to death. And older adults who fall once are twice as likely as their peers to fall again. Despite these frightening statistics, a dangerous fall does not have to be inevitable. Risk-reduction programs are offered around the country.

To reduce the risk of a fall, experts recommend that you stay physically active to improve balance and coordination — even walking helps. Other recommendations: Fall-proof your home; review your medications, since some drugs can make you dizzy or sleepy; and get vision and hearing checkups at least once a year.
To join a falls-prevention class, contact your local senior center or hospital, or find additional resources [here](#).

“As the East Coast braces for a major snowstorm, the likelihood of icy conditions leading to falls will unfortunately increase,” said Richard Fiesta, Executive Director of the Alliance. “Everyone please take your time when walking.”

**Come to the Alliance’s 2016 Western, Southern Regional Conferences**

The Alliance's quadrennial Western Regional conference will be held March 8 – 9, 2016 at the Tropicana Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada. More information is available [online](#). Please make your hotel reservation by January 29, 2016 in order to get the discounted rate.

Please note: The dates for the quadrennial Southern Regional Conference have been changed. The Southern Regional conference will be held March 29 – 30, 2016 at the Buena Vista Palace Hotel in Orlando, Florida.

During both conferences we will elect four regional board members and prepare for the upcoming 2016 elections. Questions? Contact Joni Jones at jjones@retiredamericans.org or 202-637-5377.

---

The Alliance for Retired Americans is a national organization that advocates for the rights and well-being of over 4.3 million retirees and their families.