Social Security Expansion Bills

Numerous bills to expand Social Security have been filed during this Congress. These bills will strengthen Social Security while improving the economic and retirement security of millions of Americans.

For decades, Social Security has delivered its guaranteed benefits on time and without interruption to millions of Americans. Although Social Security’s hard-earned benefits are modest – they are vitally important to all who rely on them, including seniors, people with disabilities and families of deceased workers. Today nearly 63 million Americans – 1 out of every 5 households – rely on Social Security’s lifetime, guaranteed benefits. Here is a summary of some of the expansion bills:

**Social Security Expansion Act**

The Social Security Expansion Act, S. 478 and H.R. 1170, introduced by Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Representative Peter DeFazio (D-OR), increases Social Security benefits on average by $65 a month or $800 a year, adopts the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly (CPI-E) to calculate a more accurate cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) and strengthens the Social Security Trust Fund.

The bill also reinstates benefits, until age 22 for children enrolled in college, to children whose parent has died or children of a disabled adult, and combines the Old Age and Survivors and Disability Trust Funds to ensure solvency of both programs. To pay for it and extend the trust fund through 2071, the bill raises the cap on earnings subject to Social Security contributions (currently capped at $132,900) for incomes above $250,000 and imposes a 6.2% Social Security tax on investment income for incomes above $200,000.

**Strengthening Social Security Act**

The Strengthening Social Security Act, H.R. 2654, sponsored by Representative Linda Sanchez, D-CA, increases benefits by $65 per month or $800 a year, adopts the Consumer Price Index for Elderly Consumers (CPI-E) ensuring a more adequate cost-of-living adjustment, improves benefits for widows and widowers by ensuring surviving spouses receives 75% of the total household Social Security benefits receive prior to a spouses death, and extends plan solvency to 2041.
Protecting Our Widows and Widowers in Retirement Act

The Protecting Our Widows and Widowers in Retirement (POWR) Act, H.R. 1540, introduced by Representative Linda Sanchez, D-CA, ensures a widow or widower will continue to receive up to 75% of the combined household benefits after the loss of a spouse. This is particularly important to women who generally suffer greater financially after the loss of a loved one. Women have lower earnings during their lifetime and live longer. According to the National Academy of Social Insurance, the average widow loses 33% to 50% of their Social Security benefits after the loss of their spouse.

Social Security Fairness Act

The Social Security Fairness Act, S. 521 and H.R. 141, introduced by Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Representative Rodney Davis (R-IL), repeals the government pension offset (GPO) and the windfall elimination provision (WEP), which claws back workers’ and their spouses’ Social Security benefits, if they worked for a period of time in jobs not covered by Social Security.

Twenty-five percent of public employees nationwide, including millions of retired federal, state and local government employees who worked as teachers, police, firefighters and general employees and their survivors, are affected by these provisions. The GPO has a particularly harsh affect on moderate-and low-income pensioners, with women affected disproportionately and more likely to end life in poverty.

The Social Security 2100 Act

The Social Security 2100 Act, S. 269 and H.R. 860, introduced by Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and Congressman John Larson (D-CT), provides a 2% benefit increase to all current and future beneficiaries, and institutes the CPI-E. It protects the lowest income beneficiaries by ensuring they receive at least 125% of the federal poverty level in retirement. The bill gradually increases the payroll tax for workers by 1.2% and lifts the cap on payroll taxes for those earning above $400,000.