



Expanding Social Security

For decades, Social Security has delivered guaranteed benefits on time and without interruption to millions of Americans. Americans earn their Social Security benefits, contributing into the system with every paycheck.

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

Today 66 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 high-income 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 Sen. Bernie Sanders (D-VT) and Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), 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 expands Social Security benefits across the board for current and new beneficiaries, increasing benefits by \$200 per month. Additionally, the Cost-of-Living-Adjustments (COLA) is adjusted to more accurately measure the spending patterns of seniors by adopting the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly (CPI-E).

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. 4583 and S. 2280: Social Security 2100, A Sacred Trust Act

Rep. John Larson (D-CT) and Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) introduced legislation that increases benefits for all beneficiaries and requires that wealthy Americans pay their fair share of Social Security taxes. The bill lifts the payroll cap, subjecting earnings above \$400,000 to the Social Security payroll tax, and extends the solvency of the Social Security Trust Fund until 2066.

The legislation also provides a 2% across-the-board benefit increase for 10 years, improves the annual Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) to reflect seniors' true costs, repeals the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO) that currently penalize many public servants, and also provides the Social Security Administration with desperately needed resources to boost customer service.

S. 1174 and H.R. 4535: The Medicare and Social Security Fair Share Act

Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) and Rep. Brendan Boyle (D-PA) introduced legislation that will extend the solvency of Social Security indefinitely. In addition, the bill will extend Medicare by 20 years while at the same time augment 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, since the tax applies to wages, self-employment, and investment 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.

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

This bill, introduced by Rep. Abigail Spanberger (D-VA) and Rep. Garret Graves (R-LA), and by Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH), 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.

S. 1211 and H.R. 3729: The Social Security Caregivers Credit Act

Sen. Chris Murphy (D-CT) and Rep. Brad Schneider (D-IL) 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.

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

This legislation, introduced by Rep. Gwen Moore (D-WI), improves Social Security's ability to protect Americans living in poverty. It eliminates the cap on Social Security payroll taxes and increases the program's special minimum benefit to better support those who earned low wages throughout their career. It also allows a parent providing unpaid care to a young child to earn credits toward their eventual 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.

H.R. 3261: The Strengthening Social Security Act

This legislation, introduced by Rep. Linda Sanchez (D-CA), will increase benefits, ensure the Cost-of-Living (COLA) adequately reflects the real cost of living today, and improve the Social Security Trust Fund's finances. Moreover, the bill increases monthly benefits for current and future retirees and replaces the Consumer Price Index for Wage Earners (CPI-W) with the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly (CPI-E) for the purpose of calculating COLA's. It also phases out the taxable cap of \$160,200, while increasing widow/ers benefits to the greater of 75% of combined benefits, or the Primary Insurance Amount.

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.

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 update the annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) to better reflect the real costs that seniors face through the use of the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly (CPI-E). Additionally, the bill will reward caregiving by providing a credit toward future Social Security payments, while also 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 Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) benefits.