

In the wake of the financial crisis, older Americans are grappling with diminished retirement accounts and one of the worst job markets our nation has ever faced. In the midst of such uncertainty, I am as committed as ever to protecting the bedrock promise of Social Security. Americans who have worked hard their whole lives should be able to retire with dignity.

### **The Trust Fund**

It is hard to overstate the importance of preserving Social Security benefits. 23 percent of seniors receive more than 90 percent of their income from the program. Nearly 14 percent receive all their income from it. The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities estimates that Social Security keeps nearly 13 million seniors above the poverty line.

Unfortunately, America's aging population is about to test our commitment to these seniors. Without Congressional action, the Social Security trust fund will become insolvent in 2033. To help balance the books, many Members of Congress are proposing steep cuts to Social Security benefits. I believe this is a grave mistake. We can and must preserve Social Security without renegeing on our commitment to seniors.

### **Preserving the Trust Fund**

The trust fund's shortfall is significant, but manageable, and there are reforms that will fix it without slashing benefits or raising the retirement age. Social Security taxes currently apply only to the first \$106,800 of an individual's income, meaning that America's billionaires contribute a much smaller fraction of their income to Social Security than middle- and working-class families. I have cosponsored legislation that would eliminate this cap and keep Social Security solvent indefinitely, such as the [Preserving Our Promise to Seniors Act](#) .

If Congress cannot agree on adequate reforms to Social Security, the program should be financed with money saved elsewhere. Letting President Bush's tax cuts for the richest 2 percent of Americans expire would save enough money to cover the trust fund's entire projected shortfall. Intelligent immigration reform would also put the trust fund on firmer footing by improving the ratio of workers to retirees. I support both these reforms.

### **The Privatization Threat**

Today we see misguided reform attempts that do more harm than good. Several Members of Congress are pushing for a plan that would create private Social Security accounts and allow portions of the trust fund to be invested in the stock market. In addition to saddling Social Security with higher administrative costs, this plan would open America's retirement savings to an unacceptable level of risk. Had these lawmakers succeeded in privatizing Social Security earlier, the 2008 stock market crash would have done even more damage to Americans' retirement savings.

### **COLAs**

Due to the dynamics of the formula that automatically determines Social Security's cost of living adjustments (COLAs), beneficiaries did not receive a COLA in 2010 or 2011. I consistently voted for bills that would have given beneficiaries a \$250 payment to make up for this lack of COLA, none of which were ever signed into law. Beneficiaries did, however, receive a \$250 payment in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which I also voted for. I have also cosponsored legislation that would make the COLA formula reflect seniors' unique spending needs and provide an automatic \$250 payment in years without a COLA. For 2012, beneficiaries received a COLA of 3.6%.

### **Repealing the GPO and WEP**

I strongly support repealing the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP), wrinkles in the Social Security benefit formula that have reduced benefits for many Massachusetts public employees by tens of thousands of dollars.

### **More Information:**

[A letter to President Obama opposing benefit cuts and raising the retirement age](#)

[The Preserving Our Promise to Seniors Act, which would eliminate the cap on Social Security taxes, create a unique inflation measure for seniors, and institute an automatic \\$250 payment in years where there is no COLA](#)

[Summary of the Preserving Our Promise to Seniors Act](#)

[The Social Security Fairness Act, which would repeals the GPO and WEP](#)