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SOCIAL SECURITY ALERT

By Rosalind Peterson
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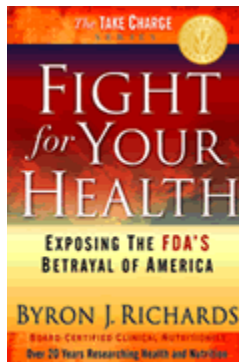
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In late 2004, and during 2005, the Bush Administration decided that they were going on a massive campaign to privatize Social Security. In response, a group of citizens in California gathered thousands of signatures on a petition to stop the privatization of Social Security. They joined other groups, like the A.A.R.P., and other individuals, and initiated an ongoing educational petition drive which moved from California and was carried across the

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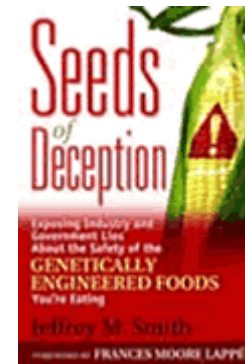
United States by long-haul truckers, by fax and telephone, the mail, and the Internet.

Many citizens across the United States emphatically protested the privatization of Social Security and the drumbeat for privatization was slowed and then almost stopped. Citizens from all walks of life impressed upon their elected representatives that there should be no negotiations on any risky form of privatization. Citizens have made it clear that they "... opposed the privatization of Social Security and supported raising the Social Security income cap to adequately address any future problems of solvency and longevity."

The Bush Administration has started the drumbeat in 2007, to once again try to privatize Social Security, stating that this costly program should be changed because it will bankrupt the nation. (We believe that the Iraq War is what has bankrupted the nation and that our elected officials have taken no action to pay for this war by borrowing from the Social Security Trust Fund and by credit card borrowing from other countries and paying the high interest rates that these countries charge U.S. Taxpayers for covering our debt. The Bush Administration's borrowing of \$Billions, not only increased the federal deficit, but has placed a burden on our children who will then have to repay this debt, with interest, in the future.)

Many people are requesting that our elected officials oppose all attempts to privatize Social Security and not negotiate a compromise on this issue. Senior citizens, who do not want to return to the days before Social Security, have banded together to protect their children from risky stock market investment schemes

this issue. Senior citizens, who do not want to return to the days before Social Security, have banded together to protect their children from risky stock market investment schemes that will weaken, and ultimately destroy Social Security.

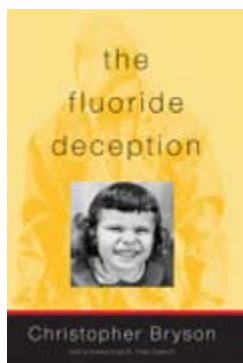




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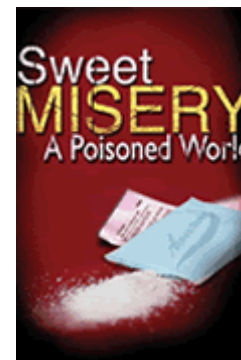
James Smith, from the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), has reiterated that Social Security, with no changes, is ...”projected to deliver full guaranteed benefits until at least 2042...and is one of the most successful “...intergenerational programs in American history...”

Social Security is a fully guaranteed insurance system that benefits senior citizens and for some, it is their only source of income. Social Security provides essential benefits to millions of Americans, disabled workers, wives, widows, retired workers, and children. The A.A.R.P. has supported a plan that would increase the income cap on Social Security to solve problems regarding future solvency and longevity.



We support California Congressman Mike Thompson in opposing these privatization plans. He stated in a standing room only meeting on Social Security in Lake County on March 5th, 2005: “...without this program more than 50 percent of our nation’s seniors would be living in poverty... Funding Social Security reform with (privatization) debts makes Social Security more insolvent, not less...”

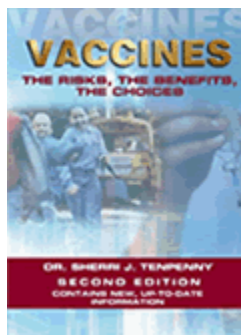
The privatization process would severely undermine our Social Security system and will have the effect of reducing benefits for all recipients. We need to ask our children if they are prepared to take over the financial responsibility for directly supporting their parents and grandparents when Social Security is no longer a viable insurance program which provides a



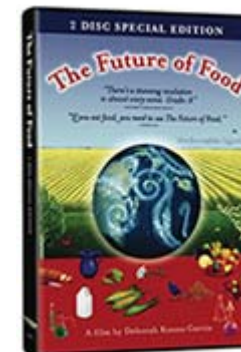
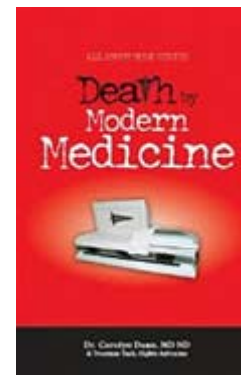


financial floor for millions of Americans of all ages. And this fact is becoming more and more of a reality as corporations are dumping their pension plans, offering employee small monetary “buyouts”, or not offering pension plans to their employees.

Many corporations are filing bankruptcy in order to opt out of pension plans or have not invested employee pension plans properly but invested in risky market schemes like unregulated HEDGE Funds that may fail at any time due to lack of public and SEC oversight (April 2007 NOW program on PBS-note that the State of California is heavily invested in these risky HEDGE Funds). Many states and other government agencies are also investing their pension plans in risky stock market schemes or HEDGE Funds which may cause a loss of retirement income. And Americans are not sure if another ENRON fraud may be in their future or whether to invest in questionable global warming “cap and trade money market schemes” which are starting to find their way onto the stock market. Once your money is invested in the stock market there is no guarantee that your money will be there when you need it.



In addition, corporations are also using part-time workers instead of full-time workers in order to not pay for pension plans and other benefits. And the practice of hiring short-term consultants is also on the increase because employers can contract with workers and not have to pay pensions or any other type of benefit. What happens when these workers reach retirement age? Will they have saved enough from part-time and contract work to support themselves later in life? When you include the outsourcing of so many American jobs to low wage



workers in sweatshops in other countries, this leaves many Americans unemployed or left in low wage situations where employers do not provide pensions, medical insurance, and other benefits for them later in life. And when corporations are allowed to hire low wage illegal immigrants and other aliens, to replace American workers, it lowers the wage for all working American citizens, if they can find employment.

There is the uncomfortable lie, now being promoted by our elected officials and corporations, that Americans who have lost their jobs can now be re-educated and re-trained by going back to college in order to find a “high-paying job somewhere”. Those in elected office and running for elected office need us to ask them the hard questions. How will they protect our pensions and our jobs? Many Americans are one or two paychecks away from disaster that could be caused by loss of pensions by senior citizens, unemployment, or illness in the family. Why aren't those running for office addressing these issues?

First, most Americans who have lost their jobs are well educated and many have college degrees. And everyone in this position resents the fact that we are being told that we can't learn and don't have the skills to perform at a high work level. Second, Americans were performing well when their jobs were eliminated and given to illegal aliens that American corporations could hire for less, or outsourced to those who would work for less money or in sweatshops in other countries. Americans even were told to train their replacements prior to being fired. Why are corporations being financially rewarded for outsourcing American jobs?



This is no guarantee that any American will find a new job that will pay as well as the one outsourced even if we go back to school. Recent statistics are beginning to show this trend. We are the best and the brightest of our generation, we are hard working, and we resent the fact that those in power feel that we need retraining and education when many of us who lost jobs are well educated and good workers. We also fear for our children because they will be in competition with low paid workers in the United States for what jobs may be available in the future.

Many American are not aware of another additional threat to the financial stability of our Social Security System. In the January 21, 2005, CRS Report for Congress on Social Security Benefits for Non-citizens under "Current Policy & Legislation" is a section on Totalization Agreements. Illegal and "...alien workers and alien dependents/survivors may receive payments while living outside the United States if they are a citizen or resident of a country with which the United States has a totalization agreement... Totalization agreements are subject to Congressional review..."

On June 29, 2004, the Social Security Administration announced that a totalization agreement with Mexico had been signed by the U.S. and Mexican government officials. The Social Security Administration reports "...that the projected cost to the U.S. Social Security System would average \$105 Million annually over the first five years...The public has not been informed about the exact wording of this totalization agreement with Mexico and whether or not it has been transmitted to Congress for review or otherwise made publicly

available...Section 233(e)(2) of the Social Security Act specifies that a totalization agreement automatically goes into effect unless the House of Representatives or the Senate adopts a resolution of disapproval within 60 session days of the agreement's transmittal to Congress..."

Since this agreement with Mexico does not have national security implications why is the Bush Administration keeping this documented agreement with Mexico and other totalization agreements secret? Is it because these agreements are another way to fleece American taxpayers and fiscally undermine Social Security?

"The January 21, 2005, CRS Report goes on to state that there were approximately 4.2 million Mexican non-citizens (illegal aliens), in the United States in 2002. "The effects of the totalization agreement with Mexico...unless otherwise specified in the agreement...would waive the five-year U.S. residency requirement for alien dependents and survivors to receive benefits outside the United States...Generally, a totalization agreement with Mexico would allow alien dependents and survivors in Mexico who have never lived in the United states to receive Social Security benefits outside the United States..." According to this report "...The totalization agreement with Mexico may be used as a de facto way to legalize unauthorized (illegal) aliens...others express concerns that that a totalization agreement with Mexico could provide an incentive for unauthorized workers from Mexico to come to the United States..." The cost of this program could undermine the U.S. Social Security system by bankrupting this program.

The U.S. Senate and Members of the House of Representatives are silent on this issue and are not currently working toward legislation that would prevent this potential threat to our Social Security System and cost the taxpayers more in the long term. In recent years more and more totalization agreements are being signed with other foreign countries as well. The "...GAO also notes that because such agreements represent a cost to the U.S. Social Security System, associated risks should be assessed..."

"In addition, the GAO found that a totalization agreement with Mexico would increase the number of Mexican workers and their family members eligible for Social Security benefits for two reasons. First, Mexican workers who otherwise would not have enough earnings credits to qualify for benefits in the United States could combine (unconfirmed) Mexican and U.S. credits to qualify for a partial U.S. Social Security Benefit. Second, more family members in Mexico would qualify for U.S. Social Security benefits because a totalization agreement generally exempts dependents and survivors residing outside the United States from the five-year U.S. residency requirements..."

We have no idea exactly how many illegal aliens reside in the United States there is no way to calculate the total cost that a totalization agreement with Mexico might have on our Social Security System. We encourage our elected representatives to reject this totalization agreement with Mexico in order to preserve the financial integrity of our Social Security System. Many members of the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate are either running

for President or to be re-elected to their current positions. We should find out where they stand on all of these important issues and ask them to sign anti-privatization and anti-totalization petitions.

Julia Norton, noted that: "...any partial privatization plan represents a threat to the economic security of women (all citizens) by replacing a portion of a secure benefit with risky stock market investments..." One Senior Citizen, Ava Peterson, noted, "...*that privatization takes everyone out of our community Social Security insurance pool, where everyone shares the risk, and puts each of us in our own pool, of one, to fend for ourselves. That's only okay if you're rich!*"

James Smith, from AARP, noted that: "...Social Security provides a guaranteed income, paying benefits every month for life, with increases for inflation, and has a much higher average rate of return than any mix of financial assets in private accounts..." He also noted: "...any risk through privatization must be taken into account, because investments in the stock market are never guaranteed...We cannot undermine the Social Security "safety net" for millions of Americans..." now or in the future.

It is time to start asking these questions of those that are in public office and those that are now running for elected office. We need specifics about their plans, not just the general statements that are spoon fed to us as slogans, while they ask for our vote. Ask your elected officials to sign a petition, or make a pledge, and see exactly where they stand on these issues.

Since raising the income cap will ensure longevity and solvency in the future there is no reason to privatize or make any other changes in our Social Security program.

Why change the character of a working benefit insurance, Social Security, if it doesn't fix any future problem of solvency? In fact, privatization would increase the public debt as much as two trillion dollars according to some estimates. The very same young people President Bush is trying to persuade to support privatization, our children and grandchildren, are the very ones who would be saddled with this huge debt and left to fend for themselves under this risky plan while trying to support their parents and grandparents who have lost their pensions and had their Social Security benefits sharply reduced.



Why are we placing this future burden on our children? Why not raise the \$90,000 income cap instead? A small change that would augment Social Security and extend its longevity well into the future. And why not stop our government from stealing Social Security funds to pay for the war in Iraq and other government expenses? The money all workers put into this fund should be held and the interest used to benefit all the people in the future who will

depend on Social Security. Let us all begin to ask questions on this important issue to those who want to represent us now and in the future.

***Never Miss
Another BIG
Story***

Social Security, the most successful entitlement program in United States history, one that has benefited so many people, should be protected now and in the future from costly foreign Totalization Agreements and those that want to initiate risky and costly privatization schemes.

Learn more about Social Security and your rights and benefits:

- 1, Social Security Administration [Home Page](#):
- 2, [Social Security Totalization Agreements](#) with other countries
- 3, [Social Security Website](#) (Foreign)
- 4, [Social Security Website](#)
- 5, [NOW April 2007 HEDGE FUND Report on PBS](#)
 - a, [NOW: Interview](#)
 - b, [Transcript of Program](#)

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In 1995, Rosalind, now retired, became a certified California United State Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency Agriculture Crop Loss Adjustor working in more than ten counties throughout California. Rosalind has a BA degree from Sonoma State University in Environmental Studies & Planning (ENSP), with emphasis on using solar power, photosynthesis, agriculture, and crop production.

Between 1989 and 1993 Rosalind worked as an Agricultural Technologist for the Mendocino County Department of Agriculture. After leaving Mendocino County she took a position with the USDA Farm Service Agency as a Program Assistant in Mendocino, Sonoma, and the Salinas County Offices, where she worked until becoming certified as a crop loss adjustor for the State.

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