

US FORUM CONNECTION #93, SEPTEMBER 2011

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SOCIAL SECURITY/MEDICARE

ACTION ITEM -- JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON DEFICIT REDUCTION POLL RESULTS CONCERNING CUTS TO SOCIAL SECURITY AND MEDICARE HEALTH CARE INFORMATION

SOCIAL SECURITY/MEDICARE

The top issue of interest to our members attending regional conferences this summer was Social Security and Medicare. For that reason information is given below that will enable to have a positive impact on the decisions being made about these two entitlements. Much of the decision being made about these programs will be done by the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction. For that reason, I have gotten together information about this committee and how to contact the committee and give your personal views on the matter. Remember that the more people who contact the committee indicating the desire of the populace to keep these programs intact the more likely Congress will be not to decrease benefits.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON DEFICIT REDUCTION

This committee is composed of three Democratic senators, three Republican senators, three Republican members of the House of Representatives and three Democratic members of the House of Representatives. Social Security and Medicare are among the major issues being studied by this committee. **NOW IS THE TIME TO CONTACT THIS COMMITTEE ABOUT YOUR CONCERNS IF EITHER OR BOTH SOCIAL SECURITY OR MEDICARE ARE CUT. THE COMMITTEE REPORT IS DUE BY THE END OF THE YEAR, BUT MOST OF ITS DECISIONS WILL BE MADE BY THE END OF OCTOBER.** The members of this committee are given below. If you reside in the state of one of these elected officials, you may contact that person directly through their regular office. You can do this by calling the Congressional Switchboard 1-866-327-8670 and requesting your call be transferred to the office of your elected official. You can also use the 1-866-327-8670 number to connect to the committee where you may get an answering machine. It is possible that if you call on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday that you may actually get a person.

If your senator or representative is not on the committee you can contact the committee directly online by going to <http://deficitreduction.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/contact>. You may want to contact both the committee and your elected official. The more calls the better if you want to minimize or prevent cuts to Medicare and/or Social Security.

Joint select committee on deficit reduction

Co chairs

Patty Murray, Senate, D-WA

Jeb Hensarling, House, R-TX

The other ten members of the committee are

Sen. Max Baucus (D-Mont.)

Rep. Xavier Becerra (D-Calif.)

Rep. Dave Camp (R-Mich.)

Rep. Jim Clyburn (D-S.C.)

Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.)

Sen. Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.)

Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio)

Sen. Pat Toomey (R-Pa.)

Rep. Fred Upton (R-Mich.)

Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.)

We will devote one section of the time at the National Legislative Seminar (NLS) in March to getting information and organizing action about Social Security and Medicare. Information on registration for NLS is given at the end of this newsletter.

A personal note. Note that there is only one woman on this committee. Considering that women are the majority of the population in the country and women make up a substantial majority of persons affected by any changes in Social Security and Medicare, it is unconscionable that only one woman is on the committee. Each of us should be aware of this, and I do not think it would be out of order to mention this in contacting Congress. One would think that in 21st Century United States of America this should not be the case.

POLL RESULTS CONCERNING CUTS TO SOCIAL SECURITY AND MEDICARE

1. Voters continue to overwhelmingly oppose cuts to Social Security and Medicare as a way to reduce the deficit. By a 50 point margin, they oppose including cuts to these programs as part of a potential Super Committee proposal (70% oppose, 20% support).

2. Opposition to Social Security and Medicare cuts as a way to reduce the deficit remains strong across party lines as 82% of Democrats, 73% of Independents, and 58% of Republicans oppose including cuts to Social Security and Medicare in the proposal.

- Voters overwhelmingly approve of raising the cap on Social Security wages above \$106,000 (71% favor, 21% oppose), which is consistent with what we have seen in past research.

- When asked to choose between tax increases on the top 2 percent of income earners or cuts to Social Security and Medicare as a way to reduce the deficit, 94% of Democrats, 82% of independents, and 64% of Republicans prefer tax increase on the top 2% of income earners.

A Breakdown of specific areas of cutting Social Security and Medicare being considered is given below.

Cutting Social Security by:

- Means testing: 72% oppose, 21% favor

- Changing the COLA formula: 66% oppose, 22% favor

- Raising the retirement age: 65% oppose, 30% favor

Cutting Medicare by:

- Raising eligibility age: 57% oppose, 39% favor
- Increasing co-pays: 56% oppose, 36% favor
- Cutting reimbursements: 65% oppose, 23% favor

The source for this information is a poll conducted by the National Committee To Protect Social Security and Medicare and the entire report can be viewed at <http://www.ncpssm.org/pdf/poll.pdf>

HEALTH CARE INFORMATION

There is a web site which "Care About Your Care" www.careaboutyourcare.org has put together. You may want to take the survey. The questions asked can give you some guidance on what to do to get the most out of a doctor visit. Unfortunately currently there is in depth information about the quality of health care in only four areas of the country. These are New York (Manhattan County), Denver/Boulder area, the Memphis area and the Kansas City area. You may want to check back to this site from time to time as Care About Your Care intends to add information about health care in other parts of the country as time goes on. I have no idea as to how long it will be before considerably more information is added.

National Legislative Seminar of the U.S. Forum
March 18th-21st, 2012

Comfort Inn, Pentagon, Arlington, Va.

Information/Registration: Liz Brewer

calb@earthlink.net, phone 570-275-1736

Registration forms are available at <http://deltakappagamma.org/US-Forum/index.html>

Great speakers, tours, White House visit, and legislative information

CONTACT ADDRESSES FOR GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

U.S. GOVERNMENT CONTACT INFORMATION can be obtained through Congressional Switchboard 1-866-327-8670 (this is a toll free number). You can contact your Congressman and Senator through this number without paying long distance charges.

To email members of Congress go to

<http://www.house.gov/> for members of the House of Representatives <http://www.senate.gov/> for members of the U.S. Senate

White House switchboard phone numbers 202-224-3121 or 202-225-3121. These numbers are **not** toll free.

STATE GOVERNMENT CONTACT INFORMATION can be obtained through <http://www.emailyourgovernor.com/> Information available at this site allows contact with governors, members of the state legislature, state supreme court, congressional delegation and state agencies such as the Education Department, Attorney General, Motor Vehicles

Department and Voter Registration. PLEASE NOTE THAT SOME OF THIS INFORMATION MAY BE OUT OF DATE

INFORMATION ON HOW YOUR CONGRESSMAN VOTED ON KEY BILLS

<http://projects.washingtonpost.com/congress/111/bills/>

FIVE CONSTITUENT CONTACTS WILL CAUSE A LEGISLATOR TO PAY SERIOUS ATTENTION TO A GIVEN ISSUE.

Archival copies of the U.S. Forum Connection can be found at

<http://ocean.otr.usm.edu/~w305514/HomePage.htm>

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Dear Forum Connection Subscribers,

It has been brought to my attention by one of our members that Social Security and Medicare are EARNED BENEFITS which were earned through payroll deductions rather than ENTITLEMENTS which are something you get for just existing.

I'm sorry about the incorrect wordage.

Angela

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