

Everett
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Franks (NJ)
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Jenkins
John
Johnson (WI)
Johnson, Sam
Jones
Kaptur
Kasich
Kelly
Kildee
Kim
Kind (WI)
King (NY)
Kingston
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Knollenberg
LaFalce
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Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
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Salmon
Sanchez
Sanford
Saxton
Scarborough
Schaefer, Dan
Schaffer, Bob
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shaw
Shimkus
Shuster
Siskiy
Skeen
Skeltion
Smith (MI)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith, Linda
Snowbarger
Solomon
Souder
Spence
Spratt
Stearns
Stenholm
Strickland
Stump
Stupak
Sununu
Talent
Tanner
Tauscher
Tauzin
Taylor (MS)
Taylor (NC)
Thomas
Thornberry
Thune
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Traficant
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Young (AK)
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Roybal-Allard
Rush
Sabo
Sanders
Sawyer
Schumer
Scott
Serrano
Shays
Sherman
Skaggs
Slaughter
Smith, Adam

NOT VOTING—6

Dixon
Gonzalez

Snyder
Stabenow
Stark
Stokes
Thompson
Thurman
Tierney
Torres
Towns
Velazquez
Vento
Waters
Watt (NC)
Waxman
Wexler
Weygand
Woolsey
Wynn
Yates

Sandlin
Smith (OR)

□ 1450

Mr. BERRY changed his vote from "no" to "aye."

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

NATIONAL DIALOGUE ON SOCIAL SECURITY ACT OF 1998

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 410 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 410

Resolved, That upon the adoption of this resolution it shall be in order without intervention of any point of order to consider in the House the bill (H.R. 3546) to provide for a national dialogue on Social Security and to establish the Bipartisan Panel to Design Long-Range Social Security Reform. The bill shall be considered as read for amendment. The amendment recommended by the Committee on Ways and Means now printed in the bill, modified by the amendments printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution, shall be considered as adopted. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill, as amended, and on any further amendment thereto to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) three hours of debate on the bill, as amended, which shall be equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Ways and Means; (2) a further amendment printed in the Congressional Record pursuant to clause 6 of rule XXIII, if offered by Representative Rangel of New York or his designee, which shall be considered as read and shall be separately debatable for one hour equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent; and (3) one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FOLEY). The gentleman from Florida (Mr. DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, for the purposes of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the distinguished gentlewoman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume.

During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 410 is a modified closed rule providing for the consideration in the House of H.R. 3546, the National Dialogue on Social Security Act of 1998. The purpose of this legislation is to provide for a national dialogue on Social Security and to establish a very important bipartisan panel to design a long-range solution for Social Security.

The rule provides for 3 hours of debate equally divided and controlled by the chairman and the ranking minority member of the Committee on Ways and Means. The rule also provides for the consideration of an amendment printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, if offered by the ranking member of the Committee on Ways and Means, which shall be considered as read and debatable for 1 hour equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent.

Finally, the rule provides for one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

Mr. Speaker, I welcome this discussion on Social Security. I think it is an issue of vital importance not only to America's seniors but to all Americans. Social Security is not only a cherished program, it is perhaps the most popularly supported as well as vital of government programs.

I wish to remind my colleagues that we are debating legislation to create a national dialogue on this issue, but we are not at this time proposing actual changes in the Social Security system. Because of this, I am of the belief that 3 hours of debate on the bill, plus 1 hour on this rule, in other words, 4 hours of debate on this issue, is more than enough time to debate this important issue.

This is not a controversial piece of legislation. If the minority wishes to amend this bill, they will have two opportunities to do so, as I have stated, with an amendment which is printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD already. And, additionally, they could attempt to do so with a motion to recommit with instructions.

We were given, Mr. Speaker, some good news with Tuesday's annual report of the board of trustees of the Social Security program: The board's projection that we will have 3 more years than originally anticipated before Social Security pays out more in benefits than it receives in payroll taxes. That is encouraging data. However, I think that it drives home the point that we need to work together as a Nation on a bipartisan basis, putting aside partisan politics, to create a stable, a long-term, thoughtful and effective solution to the retirement security system in the United States.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly support H.R. 3546, the National Dialogue on Social Security Act of 1998. I congratulate the chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, the

NOES—140

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Barrett (WI)
Becerra
Berman
Blumenauer
Boehlert
Bonior
Borski
Brown (CA)
Brown (FL)
Brown (OH)
Campbell
Capps
Cardin
Carson
Clay
Clayton
Clyburn
Conyers
Cooksey
Coyne
Cumings
Davis (IL)
DeFazio
DeGette

Delahunt
DeLauro
Deutsch
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Dooley
Engel
Eshoo
Evans
Farr
Fattah
Fazio
Filner
Foley
Frank (MA)
Furse
Ganske
Gejdenson
Gephardt
Greenwood
Gutierrez
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Hilliard
Hinchey
Hinojosa

Hooley
Hoyer
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee
(TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (CT)
Johnson, E. B.
Kanjorski
Kennedy (MA)
Kennedy (RI)
Kennelly
Kilpatrick
Kolbe
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Lee
Levin
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (GA)
Lofgren
Lowey
Maloney (CT)
Maloney (NY)
Manton
Markley
Martinez

gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARCHER), for his hard work on this legislation and urge my colleagues to support the rule.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I thank the gentleman from Florida for yielding me the customary 30 minutes.

(Ms. SLAUGHTER asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, this is a modified closed rule and has 3 hours of general debate but only one amendment; and that amendment is only allowed if it is printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

Now, I think it is ironic that a bill that is going to begin an inclusive national discussion on changes to a core government program should itself be discussed under a closed exclusive rule.

□ 1500

Now, some say that Ways and Means bills are always considered under closed rules, but this bill does not amend the Tax Code, trade policy, Medicare, or even Social Security itself. It just sets up a procedure for discussion.

Apparently its proponents believe that this procedure is so perfect and so delicate that to allow debate on any alternatives would endanger its goals and its very survival. That rigidity does not bode too well for the process that hopes to build a national consensus.

Now, this bill is going to establish a national dialogue on Social Security. It is going to be led by two facilitators, advised by a dialogue council composed of 36 members. The facilitators will conduct the dialogue through the regional meetings, through the Internet, communications, and other methods. Now, after the two facilitators and the 36 members get through, then there will be an eight-member bipartisan panel coming from somewhere recommending long-term changes.

Now, I am perplexed as to why we are taking this up because this dialogue is already under way. It is not in such a bureaucratic form. And one of the things that I do not know, as a member of the Committee on Rules that presented this rule on the floor, is what kind of budget all these facilitators and other people, dialogue coordinators, are going to require. And it seems a shame to do it because the American Association of Retired Persons and the Concord Coalition are already doing it. They are conducting a series of forums around the Nation to accomplish this very goal of a national dialogue. And the President is participating in these forums, as are Americans in all walks of life. So what we are doing is duplicating what is already being done with government money.

So there we are. To insist that the Congress establish a parallel process

seems to be a case of simply not wanting to play in the President's sandbox. I have to agree with the administration that this national dialogue process is duplicative and unnecessary.

Mr. Speaker, I oppose this bill, this rule. This bill should be considered under an open rule with the House able to freely amend the legislation to keep the portions that it considers useful and to scrap those that are not. The Congress of the United States has been described, as long as I have been alive, as the greatest deliberative body on earth, and yet the two rules that we have put forth today have literally no deliberation of any sort. They are simply put out for an up or down vote.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. WHITE) from our side had asked for time to speak. I do not see him here at this time. I saw previously the chairman from the Committee on Ways and Means. We are more than ready to commence when the other side wishes the 3 hours of general debate that we have incorporated into the rule provided by the rule on this issue.

And as I have stated, the distinguished gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARCHER), the chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, will be here throughout that entire period to answer any questions on the legislation that distinguished Members from the other side of the aisle may have.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. I yield to the gentleman from New York.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, since we have 3 hours debate, and it appears as though my colleague does not have anyone to engage in it, maybe I can ask him some questions about the rule, and we could notify the Members through television.

Does this resolution that sets up this committee, does it provide anything about the solvency of Social Security? Are they given directions as relates to that?

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, as the gentleman knows, that is not a question on the rule, that is a question on the Commission set up by the legislation that is brought to the floor on the rule.

If the gentleman says he has a question on the rule, I will be glad to answer it.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield further, I am just asking does the rule give any direction at all to the Commissioners being set up in terms of the Social Security system?

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. No, the rule does not.

Mr. RANGEL. There is no direction as to what they study?

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Not under the rule, no.

Mr. RANGEL. Let me ask my colleague, what does the rule state? What does the rule have to do with this Commission?

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. The rule brings this legislation to the floor.

Mr. RANGEL. I had really thought that my colleagues that sit on the Committee on Rules understood substantively what would be in the bill so that when they bring it to the floor, the people have a better understanding as to whether they want the bill to come out in the first place.

So I am asking, can my colleague discuss the bill that my colleagues are asking us to rule on at all?

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Yes, we can certainly attempt to discuss the substantive legislation that that rule is bringing forward.

Mr. RANGEL. Good.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. But I would not attempt to even pretend that I am as expert on the substantive legislation as the chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, who will be in control of the 3 hours of debating time that we provide under the rule for the House on the substantive legislation.

Mr. RANGEL. I am only talking about this 1 hour.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. And for the gentleman to understand the rule that is bringing this legislation to the floor, we have 1 hour.

Mr. RANGEL. But the legislation that is coming to the floor, does it allow for Members of Congress to be appointed to the Commission?

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. There is certainly input from Members of Congress to be in the process of the appointment of the Commission. But I may say, if the gentleman would permit, that the Commission and this process, this process that is created by the substantive legislation was worked on for significant number of time with much effort by many members of this committee of this House, especially members of the committee that the distinguished gentleman from New York is a member of, the Committee on Ways and Means.

Mr. RANGEL. So is my colleague saying that Members of Congress should be appointed to this Commission?

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. This Commission provides for input from the Congress.

Mr. RANGEL. But, I mean, could a Member serve on the Commission at all?

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Members of Congress may be appointed to the Commission. But as I say, I would not dare to even pretend that I am as expert on the process of the Commission itself as the distinguished chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means or, quite frankly, of anyone who, as a member of the Committee on Ways and Means, has been working for a long period of time on the substantive legislation that we bring to the floor today.

I do know that we bring it to the floor with an hour of debate on the rule

and with 3 hours of debate on the substantive legislation. And even though I am more than confident that the distinguished gentleman from New York is very well aware of the details of the legislation, if the gentleman has any questions, I know that I know the gentleman knows by working day in and day out with the chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means that the questions would be answered within the 3 hours.

Mr. RANGEL. Well, if the distinguished chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means is on the floor, there is no question he will be able to answer the questions that have been discussed and debated in the full Committee on Ways and Means.

I had thought, though, that this exchange might encourage people to vote for or against the rule. But since the gentleman would rather yield to the chairman of the committee, then I would thank the gentleman for this exchange.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Certainly. And any other questions, I would be willing to attempt to answer them. But the chairman is here, and the 3 hours will be controlled by the chairman on the substantive measure that we brought to the floor today.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFazio).

Mr. DEFazio. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from New York for yielding.

Make no mistake, there is no substantive legislation before the House of Representatives on the issue of Social Security today. This is our regular biennial election year dodge of a tough issue.

We had a Commission on Social Security. They were deeply divided, but they came up with reams of data and alternatives and voted among themselves.

Any Member of Congress who sits here today who cannot go home to his or her constituents and tell them what they think should be done to make Social Security as a viable program for the next century does not deserve to sit in this body.

What we are trying to do, or what the majority is trying to do here today is hide their real opinions, the radical breakup of Social Security, which we never wanted, and privatize the proposals to make Wall Street rich, turn it into 200 million IRAs, and let people rise or fall with the stock market. God, think of the billions of dollars in commission that could be made under that proposal.

Well, I think that is wrong. I support a much more modest proposal. Take the money we are stealing from Social Security on an annual basis. Social Security will collect \$80 billion more this year than it needs to pay benefits. That money is supposed to go in a Trust Fund. It does not. It is being borrowed and replaced by IOUs.

Take that money and invest it in real assets like a number of other retirement programs do around the country. Do not let Congress spend it. Do not replace it with IOUs. Do not let them give it away in a tax cut for the wealthy. Put that money in real investments to begin to take care of the baby boom in the next century. That is only one alternative, and it was one that was put forward by the last Commission.

We do not need another Commission. But, truthfully, the White House is dodging, too. They have got this staged debate going on between the Concord Coalition and AARP around the country. Who anointed those groups as the gurus or the seers to get us to a very difficult solution on Social Security?

It is up to this body, the United States House of Representatives, to put forward some solutions. Stop dodging. Yeah, this is a tough issue, but make our views known. Go home and campaign on them. If they really believe Americans want to destroy Social Security and set up 200 million IRAs and roll the dice, then go home and campaign on that. And I do not think I will see them next year.

But if they have other solutions, let those be known to their constituents. Sponsor legislation. Introduce legislation. Go home and make their views known to their constituents. Do not hide behind another phoney commission so just after the election they can try and jam through an unpopular proposal which destroys the integrity of Social Security under the guise of saying, "Hey, it was not my idea. The Commission told us we had to do this," and it is all we have got before us.

This is a bad bill. It is a limited bill. It is amazing to me that we are having a debate with so little interest about a program so vital on the floor of the House of Representatives.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5½ minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. STARK).

(Mr. STARK asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, the other side of the aisle today will present this bill for debate to assure the public that this Congress is working in the spirit of our limited floor schedule on long-term policies such as saving Social Security for our children.

I rather suspect that the children they talk about preserving Social Security for are being used as a shield in this debate because of a frontal assault that Republicans have been using on so many will not work.

It is a good idea to have a dialogue. I think we should start opening the dialogue with the majority leader's remarks, and I quote the majority leader's remarks, in saying that Social Security "should be phased out. Eventually we will be able to phase the government programs out and phase private programs in."

The Speaker's think tank, the Progressive and Freedom Foundation, that preserves I do not know what for all Americans, says, "There is an even more important moral question raised by the government's role as chief provider in old age. It sends an un-American message that it is not your responsibility to take care of yourself." Basically, the Speaker is suggesting that Social Security is un-American.

That is a good place to start this dialogue. It is time for the public, quotes the Speaker's think tank, to take back from government responsibility for their futures, including their retirements.

What will we do about the hard-working Americans who happen to become disabled or those who die early leaving their children with no means of support? And what about the 30 percent of Social Security beneficiaries who are elderly women whose wages never were at a livable level and never enabled them to save for their retirement years? Let us enter into a dialogue with that and see what my Republican colleagues would do.

It is a long-range problem. It could be solved with a 1 percent increase in taxes for all time. I applaud efforts to work on long-term solutions that would really apply and benefit our children, but I am cynical that this Republican leadership will do the right thing on Social Security, even for kids.

Look at their track record. They have repeatedly failed to face the tough issues that threaten our children because of their refusal to ruffle the feathers of the rich political constituencies that they serve.

Where is the Republican leadership on providing managed care safeguards that our children will get the health care from HMOs that their parents have paid for, except denial for reasonable claims? Where is the Republican leadership when they have realized that 230 Members of this House support the managed care reform bill, but the leadership fails to bring it to this body? Are they going to appoint a commission for that?

What about global warming? That is a long-range problem. We have not heard a peep out of the Republicans on that. Protecting our world environment is as crucial an effort for our children as saving Social Security. There may not be an environment for these children to live in.

□ 1515

What about rules to assure that Congress is no longer tainted by illegal campaign contributions? The Republicans have amongst them a criminal, a convicted criminal who has been sentenced to serve in this House in the Republican Party. Now, that is creative judicial sentencing. It may be the worst sentence that anybody has ever been dealt in the history of the Federal judiciary.

But what are the Republicans doing to clean up the criminals in their own

ranks and lead us to an improved campaign finance reform? Nothing. Is that not a long-range problem that we ought to be concerned about? The leadership says they want to preserve all kinds of things for the future, but they ignore them. Is this just one more issue of benign neglect?

Are they for cutting funds, as we sit here, for housing the poor? Yes, they are in a proposed supplemental. Are they refusing food stamps for legal immigrants? Yes, they are. Are they refusing to provide the funds necessary to enforce the Kennedy-Kassebaum health insurance bill? They are indeed. If there was ever an industry that needs oversight, it is the insurance industry.

And what are they doing to look at Prudential's \$3 billion of restitution to its customers for fraudulent sales practices? Is it that same Prudential that they want to take over and manage Social Security under privatization? I certainly hope not.

I surmise the leadership is up to more of the same pattern. Their attempts to preserve Social Security are merely an attempt to dissuade the public from our facing the tough issues of the future. Has the responsibility and self-reliance mantra erased any trace of human kindness and of responsibility for the less fortunate in our society? I think that the opening dialogue of the Republicans says that that is their position.

I challenge the Republicans to face up to all the issues that affect our children, including Social Security, and let us work to resolve them. Let us see this Congress produce some legislation that does some good for the Americans instead of deflecting the real true issues by referring them to a commission.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle present this bill today for debate to assure the public that this Congress is working—in spite of our limited floor schedule this year—on long-term problems such as saving Social Security for our children.

Are the children being used as a shield in this debate because a frontal assault on Social Security won't work?

As you all remember, the Speaker's comments on Medicare didn't go over very well. Who could forget the Speaker's comments that Medicare should wither on the vine? And the Majority Leader's remarks that Medicare was "a program he would have no part of in a free world."

Let's just hope that Americans do become involved in the Social Security debate because, left to this leadership, there would be no Social Security program left.

The Majority Leader's position on Social Security is clear. He's been consistent since his first campaign for the House in 1984 in the position that Social Security "should be phased out . . . eventually we would be able to phase the government programs out and phase the private programs in."

The Speaker's think tank, the Progressive and Freedom Foundation, also promotes some unequivocal views on Social Security. According to a February, 1995 newsletter, the Speaker's foundation is advocating for the complete and immediate elimination of Social Security on moral grounds that it is un-American:

There is an even more important moral question raised by the government's role as chief provider in old-age. It sends the un-American message that is not your responsibility to take care of yourself.

It is time for the public to take back from government responsibility for their futures, including their retirements. And public policy should encourage the historic American virtues of hard work and frugality. Now, not in several decades, is the time to make this change.

What of those hard-working Americans who happen to become disabled, or those who die early leaving their children with no means of support?

What about the elderly women whose wages never were at a livable rate to enable them to save for their retirement years?

What would become of them under the leadership's plan to privatize Social Security?

The leadership would have the public believe that Social Security is in perilous condition and in need of being totally redesigned. We know better. Social Security will be solvent through the year 2032. A payroll tax increase of 1% could alleviate the demographic strain that we predict for that time. But rather than talk about this or any other option to strengthen the program, we debate today another commission to do the work of this Congress. And the leadership claims it promotes this bill for the children.

I applaud all efforts to work on long-term solutions that would really benefit our children. But I am cynical that this leadership will do the right thing on Social Security, even for the kids. Just look at their track record. They have repeatedly failed to face the tough issues that threaten our children because of their refusal to ruffle the feathers of their political constituencies to get the job done.

For example, where has this leadership done to provide healthcare for all children. What better example of a current need with long-term implications for both individuals and our economy than finding a way to cover the 45 million Americans—many millions of them children—who have no insurance and are not receiving the care they need. Millions of kids have no preventive healthcare or treatment of small problems, like ear infections, before they grow to major problems, like hearing loss.

Is this House leadership willing to face their NFIB supporters and the insurance industry on that one—for the kids?

Where is this leadership on providing managed care safeguards so that our children will get the healthcare from HMOs that their parents have paid for instead of denial after denial for reasonable claims made? The leadership is aware that 230 Members of this House support the lead managed care reform bill but the leadership fails to bring the measure up for a vote because of objections from business and the insurance lobbyists. Kids matter, but not as much as campaign contributions.

How about global warming? Protecting our world environment is a critical concern for today's children and their children but is this House leadership willing to buck their major corporate supporters to do the right thing on the environment? Experience tells us they won't—not even for our children.

What about this leadership taking action on rules to assure this Congress is not totally tainted by money? Isn't preserving a clean U.S. Congress key to assuring a "government of the people by the people for the people" for our children? Yet this House leadership has made a mockery of House consideration of campaign finance reform and has not even censured their colleague who plead guilty to criminal campaign violations. His sentence requires that he stay in Washington so that he can vote instead of serving time in a federal penitentiary. What message does this send to our kids about public service in Washington, DC?

The leadership says they want to take this bill up today to preserve Social Security for our kids but they ignore our children's need for quality education. This leadership's action is not just benign neglect—they are promoting policies right now that will hurt our children in our emergency supplemental: cutting funds to provide housing for poor families; refusing to provide food stamp benefits to legal immigrants families; refusing to provide the funds needed to enforce Kennedy-Kassebaum health insurance bill which passed this House by vote of 421 to 2. If ever there is an industry that needs oversight, it is the insurance industry. Prudential's \$3 billion restitution to its customers for fraudulent sales practices is proof of that!

This leadership won't even provide the funds to pay our UN debt to work for world peace for all children.

In light of this pattern, I surmise that what the leadership is up to is more of the same pattern. Their attempts to "preserve" Social Security by establishing individual accounts are nothing more than a gift of hundreds of billions of dollars in business to Wall Street. That even tops the \$50 billion tax break for the tobacco companies that the leadership attempted last year.

Just as the public wouldn't let them get away with the tobacco tax break, I'm counting on the public to see through their rhetoric this time because the facts on Social Security are clear: it's been a resounding success.

Although privatization of Social Security is the topic de jour in America, we have an example of an safety net that has worked—and worked well—for over 60 years. We should focus on maintaining it's solvency past 2032, not dismantling the program.

Social Security replaces about 40 percent of pre-retirement wages for average earner, 57 percent for low-earner and 27 percent for a high-earner. By design, it cushions those who have fewer resources to save. In 1996, Social Security lifted 11.7 million elderly people out of poverty.

Two-thirds of elderly receive most of their income from Social Security. Without Social Security, one-half of older Americans would live in poverty.

In addition to the elderly, 3.5 million non-elderly adults and 800,000 children were lifted out of poverty by Social Security in 1996.

Its mandatory nature assures that all workers start their retirement nest egg with their first paycheck and increase their savings amounts automatically as their wages increase. Its social insurance component shields families from a wage earner's untimely death or disability, and subsidizes the lowest paid wage earners with the earnings of others.

Social Security works because it is more than a savings account for individuals—it is a commitment that our society make to its members that there will be a safety net for workers and their families in the event of their disability or death during wage earnings years.

Individual accounts take care of those who are sophisticated enough to invest their funds well; they leave the low wage folks, the unsophisticated, the disabled, the widows with young children out in the cold. Is that what America is about?

Has the "responsibility and self-reliance" mantra erased any trace of collective responsibility for the less fortunate in our society? I think not.

I challenge the leadership to face up to all the issues that effect our children, including Social Security, and to work to resolve these issues.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER).

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Florida for yielding me this time. I am here to talk about Social Security today. I want to rise in support of the rule as well as this legislation, H.R. 3546, legislation which will create a national dialogue on Social Security, an important effort and frankly what should be a bipartisan effort.

Over the last 3 years that I have had the privilege of representing the south side of Chicago and the south suburbs, clearly one of the most diverse districts in Illinois, city, suburbs and country, I have heard a pretty clear message from the folks back home when it comes to Social Security. One of the most clear messages that I have heard is that as we work to solve the long-term challenges of Social Security, we need to work in a bipartisan way.

We also need to work to honor the contract of Social Security, not just for today's seniors but for every generation, the children and grandchildren of those who are currently collecting Social Security, frankly people like my mom and dad, my Aunt Mary, my Aunt Eileen, my Uncle Jack, my Uncle Bob, their wives and families. Social Security is pretty important. Frankly, it is going to require a team effort and a bipartisan effort.

Just a few weeks ago, a few of us participated in a national dialogue with President Clinton in a bipartisan effort to solve the challenges facing Social Security. The President hosted a town meeting in Kansas City and he asked five of us to participate in a satellite hookup with town meetings back in our own districts.

There was a very clear message at the South Holland home for retirees in South Holland, Illinois, in the south suburbs of Chicago. Three hundred seniors were gathered there. They were thrilled that they were going to have an opportunity to communicate directly with the President of the United States, even though he was not there personally, it was via a satellite hookup. But they had a pretty clear message when it came to Social Security.

They said, "Number one is, Mr. President, let's keep the politics out of Social Security. If we're going to solve Social Security's challenges, Republicans and Democrats need to work together. For those who wish to demagogue and those who wish to play politics, just tell them to be quiet and work together and to work in a bipartisan way. Because Social Security is not a Democrat program, it is not a Republican program. Social Security belongs to the folks back home, the people who pay the bills and work hard. We want Social Security solved in a bipartisan way."

One other very clear point that the seniors at the Holland home in South Holland, Illinois also made when we communicated with the President in our bipartisan dialogue on the future of Social Security is that the seniors refuse to support a tax increase on their children and grandchildren to save Social Security. Clearly that was a loud message: No more taxes on their children, no more taxes on working Americans to fix Social Security. Let us do a better job of managing the program, because there is a lot out there, and we can do a better job.

That is why this legislation is so important. We are putting in place in the statutes a mechanism, a bipartisan commission made up equally of Republicans, equally of Democrats, which will help solve the problem.

In closing, I just want to say this legislation is so important because this legislation to establish a national dialogue on Social Security lays out the basic rules: Solving Social Security must be a bipartisan effort. Republicans and Democrats should work together.

Every American should be part of this dialogue. Every American has so much at stake. Every American should be part of the process. Let us keep the politics out of Social Security. Let us pass this rule. Let us pass this legislation.

Let me close by saluting the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARCHER) and the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. BUNNING) for their good work in keeping this a bipartisan effort.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, if I could just take a second to talk about taking politics out. Only two of these eight Members are going to be appointed by Democrats.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY).

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying I agree with a great

deal of what the gentleman from Illinois just said, particularly that we need a bipartisan approach as we tackle this most important of issues to the people we represent across the country.

That is why I am forced to rise against the rule. In fact, having a closed rule that shuts out the minority, or for that matter Members of the majority, from offering an amendment that might make the process even better than proposed is itself a partisan majority heavy-handed tactic that unfortunately has this debate unfold today in perhaps a less constructive way than might otherwise have been the course.

We are already in a national debate on Social Security. I think already we have clearly identified the core commitments in the program that have to be continued no matter what: The survivor benefit, so that in the untimely death of a breadwinner there continues to be Social Security support for the spouse and children. The disability benefit, so that if you get incapacitated and cannot work, you will have income, you will be able to live. And, thirdly, the retirement benefit that will pay on an absolutely guaranteed dependable basis just as long as you may live. Those core assurances are in the program, are what make this program our greatest program, and they must remain no matter what.

The President, I think, has done us a lot of good in kicking off this national period of discussion on Social Security. He has had the first meeting, as was mentioned, in Kansas City just a few weeks ago.

One amendment that I would have offered to the bill regarding the commission advanced by the chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means is its report date. It reports in February of 1999. It slows up the ability of the next Congress, in my opinion, to get at the Social Security issue in a constructive, bipartisan way. I wish we could debate that date, that reporting date this afternoon. Under the closed rule, we will not be able to.

One thing that will come out late in the debate on the bill that I think will add significant value to this legislation is offered in the motion to recommit opportunity that I will be offering. This motion to recommit will ensure that every penny of surplus is held until comprehensive resolution of the Social Security reforms is completed. The President said it first and he said it best when he said save Social Security first relative to the surplus. I think it is imperative that the House, every Member of the House, goes on record this afternoon in pledging their commitment that all of the surplus is held to save Social Security first. That will be the motion to recommit I will be offering later.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. Just a point of clarification based on the statement made by the distinguished gentlewoman from New

York when she pointed out, she stated that there was a difference in amounts of Republicans and Democrats on this panel.

If we look at section 203 of the legislation, it states four shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House and the majority leader of the Senate, two by the President and two by the minority in the House and in the Senate. So it is four and four. I just wanted to point that out.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 7 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KASICH).

Mr. KASICH. Mr. Speaker, I have not had an opportunity to hear all of the debate, but for those who think that we are on the verge of being able to deal meaningfully with Social Security, I think some of the comments that have been made down here on the House floor by a couple of folks who were being very partisan really brings to mind, for the people in this House who are watching this debate, the difficulty in at the end of the day being able to solve some of the biggest problems we have with Social Security.

The purpose of this commission which the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. BUNNING), and I want to praise him for his leadership, he has been working on this a long time, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARCHER) who obviously has great interest in Social Security and addressed it as long as, I think, 10 or 15 years ago, back when he was young, and I want to thank the two of them for allowing me to be part of this effort to create this commission, it is designed to do one thing, and that is to inform the public about what the circumstances are on Social Security.

My wife and I were on vacation, I guess it was about 2 weeks ago. We were down in Naples, Florida, and I picked up a newspaper. We had had all this talk about all the different plans that had been laid out on Social Security, and the poll that was in the newspaper in Naples, Florida, indicated only about 15 percent of our senior citizens knew that there was even any discussion about Social Security. I think it is very positive that a number of Members of both the House and the Senate have agreed to discuss this issue, but that is like discussing it in a vacuum until we are able to engage the entire country.

Now, the young people of this country are very sensitive about us getting something done. I would urge them for the 500 millionth time to go to the polls and vote, so that when you have an opinion, someone will pay attention to you. I would say to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARCHER), there has been some constant mantra of which I have been part that says there are more young people who believe in seeing a UFO than a Social Security check. I said, "That's right, but there are probably more Martians who will land on Earth than young people who will vote." That is why young people much of the time are not listened to.

I want to praise the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. BUNNING) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARCHER) and all the people who have engaged in this discussion on behalf of the younger generation who believe that they will not get anything.

In terms of our senior citizens, we have to recognize the fact that there are many senior citizens who have come to depend on Social Security as necessary for their well-being, and the message we want to deliver to our seniors today is, "We are going to live up to our word, you will be protected," and those closest to Social Security will be.

But if we get to the nub of the problem, it is actually fairly simple. We have a lot of people who are getting benefits and who are about to get benefits, but we have even more people who are working in order to pay those benefits. Some people argue that what we ought to do is to allow people to take some of their payments off the table.

The issue is, if the gentleman from Florida (Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART) decides to take his money off the table and put it in a savings account for himself, how does his mother get her payments? See, that is the trick. The trick is how do you do the transition to making sure that Mom and Dad get their benefits and those who are close to getting their benefits get theirs, while at the same time making sure that the gentleman from Florida is going to be able to have his benefits?

Now, here is the other rub. Lincoln needs to get his benefits, and there are a lot of Lincolns. I am in his category. I am a baby boomer. I am going to retire, Lincoln is going to retire, all the baby boomers up here; the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. NEUMANN) is going to retire. There are a whole heck of a lot of us but there are not as many young people to be able to support us.

So the answer is, we have got to figure out a way so the gentleman from Florida and the gentleman from Wisconsin and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KASICH) can get their benefits by earning more on our payments, on our investments. We have got to be able to earn more, because we cannot tell our kids to work around the clock to give us our program.

□ 1530

So we are going to have to change Social Security, not privatize it. We do not want anybody going their own way. There is going to be some basic program, but we clearly want to give people more control over their own resources.

Now I have a program that we can get started this year, and it would divide up the surplus so that every American who currently pays Social Security taxes would get a piece of that surplus and that we could invest it the same way Federal employees do. It would be separate, it would be removed from Social Security but will do a couple of things: would make us com-

fortable with the notion that being able to be in investments like Federal employees are means we will be able to have higher earnings; secondly, it will make us more comfortable with this change; thirdly, it will protect our senior citizens; and, fourthly, really it will keep the politicians from spending the surplus. We ought to do this now, but in light of all the controversy we got to be talking across America. Everybody has to understand what is at stake.

Mr. Speaker, do my colleagues know the wonderful thing about the public? And this is not rhetoric, I believe it. The people of our country are the most selfless people on the face of the earth, and once they understand the challenge they are willing to dig in and confront whatever concerns they have and resolve things for the best interests of America.

And no one generation wants to take from another. In fact, in this debate we could have a win-win-win. If the budget surplus can continue to grow, if the economy can continue to be strong, to a large degree we may be able to solve that transition problem without any root canal. We do not know yet.

So that is why we need, however, to enter into discussions. We need to enter into discussions with all Americans so that every single American who breathes air, who is at one time or another in their life going to be either paying into Social Security or getting out of Social Security, understands exactly what the deal is so that we as a Nation can move together.

Social Security is very unique. It is like the flag. It is like apple pie. It is a piece and part of America. We need to move it into the 21st century by giving people more control but, at the same time, reassuring everyone that the system will be there, that it will be sound and that we will have the courage to make the long-term update to improve it, to enhance it so that every American can be secure in their senior years.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is a great piece of legislation to pass. It should not be a Republican-Democrat fight. It is an effort to try to move all America forward together.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. WISE).

Mr. WISE. Mr. Speaker, I am not sure how I feel about this dialogue commission, to be honest with my colleagues. We want a dialogue that will be great, will network, will interact, all the other buzz words. Clearly, it is important to have discussions taking place about Social Security.

The first premise ought to be Social Security and Medicare are to be protected at all costs and that we are going to guarantee that Social Security is going to continue to be there. Certainly a program where two-thirds of the beneficiaries report that it is their bulk of their retirement income is vital to this country.

But this discussion also is important, yes, for senior citizens who are covered

by Social Security, and, yes, for the workers who are paying into Social Security so that Social Security will be there when they in turn retire, but it is important for young people as well. Because Social Security is how young people keep their independence because they do not have to take care of their parents and their grandparents like they did 75 and 100 years ago. Social Security and Medicare do that.

So I hope that this looks at all the options, but I hope in this 3-hour discussion we are about to have that some of my colleagues in the Republican leadership could answer some questions for me. Because the commission is important, but, as I recall, the commission has a report date of some time in 1999, and yet I just heard the chairman of the Committee on the Budget, a very powerful person in the leadership, talk about bringing a bill. He would like to bring something to the floor this year. And I have heard others in the Republican leadership talk about bringing proposals to the floor this year.

Well, certainly in a program that is as vital as Social Security I would hope that we are going to truly study this, rather than rush something through in a session that is to last 40 days and will greatly impact millions of beneficiaries both today and in the future.

I look at the privatization proposals. Sounds attractive. I love to be able to make sure that we could continue investing in equities and have it grow at the present rate.

But look at what the Social Security Commission previously reported. One of these proposals will cost \$2 trillion, \$2 trillion to cover transition costs as we pay off present beneficiaries, as we guarantee benefits will be there at some scales, some level for future beneficiaries, \$2 trillion added to the deficit at a time we have a surplus.

That is why I happen to believe that certainly during the lifetime of this dialogue commission that what we have got going is that we support what President Clinton said, put the budget surplus into Social Security and we save Social Security first.

I do hope that some will come to the floor and ease my mind on what the legislative schedule is going to be on Social Security this year. All of us want to work on Social Security in a responsible way, but I do not want to be seeing this Congress trying to pass something, particularly trying to pass something before its own commission that it created comes back. What is the purpose? What is the point?

So, Mr. Speaker, that is something I think we ought to be looking at.

In terms of privatization, there are a number of questions that have to be asked. Hopefully, this can begin that process.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the distinguished gentleman from California (Mr. CUNNINGHAM).

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, I think this is a healthy dialogue that we have here today.

As my colleagues know, the very first time I heard of Social Security problems was when I first came in Congress. A group came to me and said, "Hey, Duke, do you know anything about the notch?" And everybody that is in this body knows about the notch babies and the problems that it has precluded for most of us.

Also, I do not believe that Social Security was ever meant to be a retirement system, but for many people, and not so many in my district as we have in other districts, but many of them, especially in our lower income, Social Security is all they have, and I think it would be healthy to look at a dialogue in which we enable people to have more than Social Security.

I thought it was wrong in 1993 when the President increased the tax on Social Security because I think we do things backward in this country. I think we tax annuities for savings. I think we ought to give an incentive for taxing annuities, for, excuse me, for saving for our chronologically gifted years and one's time.

We tax work. I think we should not tax work, but we ought to give incentive to work.

But if we look, we ought to have a national dialogue in which we can allow people to plan not only for retirement, to protect the Social Security. And the first thing we did is say, "Keep your hands off the Social Security Trust Fund. Because any time you run in a deficit, then you have to put an IOU into that account and draw it back. And the only way you can ever replace it is when you have a surplus like we may have coming up, which really isn't a surplus because we use those accounts to balance the budget," and that is wrong, too, I think.

But, yes, we ought to save Social Security and protect it as it is, but the dialog should be, how can we make it better?

With the gift of compound interest, instead of ending up with one's investment of, say, like \$175,000, one can end up with almost a million dollars. They can draw \$60,000 a year just on the interest. I mean, that is worth. And I am not saying that is the way to do it, but is that not worth a dialogue with our chronologically gifted folks, with the baby boomers and with the pre-baby boomers to see if we can give them more than just what we have given? It is not enough, and too many people are on a fixed income.

I thank my colleagues for engaging in the dialogue and on the issue.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HEFNER).

Mr. HEFNER. Mr. Speaker, as one that is going to leave this place shortly, I certainly hope that we find some way to shore up Social Security. But I would like to not correct one thing but make a comment about what my colleague from California said, about in 1993 when we passed a budget and we added some tax we counted 85 percent

of Social Security, but it was just for a certain group. And I would remind the gentleman that was Ronald Reagan who had it at 50 percent, so that everybody has a little bit culpability there. But I think we ought to be very careful when we start talking about Social Security.

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. HEFNER. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, I think it is wrong for either President to increase, and my whole point is let us not tax annuities in savings, let us give incentive.

Mr. HEFNER. Okay. Is that all?

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Yes.

Mr. HEFNER. Mr. Speaker, we better be very careful in Social Security. Now we are talking about people's Social Security being taxed.

Now the people in my district, the majority of them that count on Social Security are not people that pay any tax. These are people that worked in textile mills for 40 or 50 years and their husband and wife worked for 40 years and retired on \$18 a month pension from their jobs. So they have to count, absolutely count, on Social Security and Medicare for their survival. That is the reason they get so upset.

Now I do not have any problems with talking about something to make, where people can make an investment in a private account of whatever, but we do not talk about Social Security as it really is. And at my age I have people in my district and relatives that when their families had a catastrophe in their early lives and they had small children and one of the spouses had no skills, could not work, Social Security comes in and they get some benefits until these kids finish school. That is an insurance policy.

Nobody ever talks much about the benefits of Social Security, and people could not go out and buy that protection for what they pay into Social Security, and that is what it was set up for.

So before we start fiddling too much in privatization of Social Security, we better be sure what we are doing. Because there is an awful lot of people, some 40 million people out there, senior citizens, that enjoy some independence because of Social Security and Medicare, and it would be an absolute travesty for us to do anything that causes them any more turmoil in their life.

I think Social Security was one of the greatest things that we have ever established in this country. And the Chairman of the Committee on the Budget talked about a budget surplus, and I would just remind the House that in 1993 we passed, without a single Republican vote, a package adding such people as Mr. Greenspan, certainly not a liberal economist, and people have given credit for that, for this economy staying on track for all these years and for interest rates to be low, that enable us to get to this balanced budget and to have a surplus.

But, in my view, when we owe \$2 or \$3 or \$4 trillion, we do not have a surplus, and it does not take but just a small downturn in this economy for this so-called surplus to turn into a real deficit again.

So we best be very careful what we do and how we proceed on Social Security, because it is so violent to all of our forefathers.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH).

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding this time to me.

I hope everybody might be as excited as I am about moving ahead with a solution to Social Security. I introduced my first Social Security bill when I arrived in 1993 and then three years ago in the 104th session and again last year I introduced H.R. 3082 and H.R. 3560, the only bills, by the way, that have been scored by the Social Security Administration to keep Social Security solvent for the next 75 years.

It seems to me that, as we develop a national dialogue, as we inform the American people of what the situation is, there are about four or five things that we need as our guidelines: number one, the solution needs to be bipartisan; number two, we keep every possible solution on the table so that we can evaluate all of them. No. 3, that we do not reduce the benefit for current or near term retirees. Four, that any proposal for investment contain a "safety net" of guaranteed minimum benefits. And finally, that we do not play politics with this important issue. The danger that I see in an election year is the demagoguing of particular solution.

□ 1545

I will fight the demagoguing of solutions by Republicans or Democrats. Let us keep everything on the table as we develop this national dialogue over the next ten months.

Mr. Speaker, I have given over 200 speeches in my district, around the State of Michigan and around the country on Social Security. I still find many people that believe if Congress would keep their hands out of the Social Security Trust Fund, that everything would be okay.

In that Trust Fund is about \$600 billion; \$600 billion in relation to what we spend every year on Social Security would last about a year and 7 months. Even so, we have to make sure that we pay it back; and we stop using the extra money coming in to the Trust Fund to mask the deficit.

Let us save all the unified budget surplus for Social Security. But again the actuaries at Social Security today estimated that using all of the surpluses for the next eighteen years would solve less than 20% of the problem. Social Security solvency is a very serious problem with an estimated actuarial debt or unfunded mandate of \$3 trillion.

Mr. Speaker, I am excited about the fact that we are going to bring this issue to light talking about facts not fiction. Current and future retirees deserve our honesty.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE).

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER) for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, each time we return to our respective districts, I think there is one consistent question that is raised by young and old alike, and that is, what is going on with Social Security. In fact, at a recent meeting with my retired teachers, they not only asked what is going on with Social Security, but because they are peculiarly in a State like Texas, they were concerned about not getting Social Security because of the unique teacher retirement system.

They also asked about PSAs, personal savings accounts, and I frankly told them that the one thing that I would be concerned about any sort of program that would siphon off dollars is for those seniors who depend solely upon Social Security. I think this particular chart that says Social Security is the most important source of income from the elderly shows that of any other source, 40 percent of the elderly's income, our moms and dads, is from Social Security.

So certainly today's discussion is important. I do not think, however, a closed rule is the right direction to go, because yes, we have 3 hours, but I do not think we have the openness for opportunity for different approaches to this particular legislation.

It is clearly true that the board of trustees for Social Security has projected that on an average over the next 75 years, its expenditure will exceed income by 17 percent. However, we have just gotten a bit of good news because we now know that it will be solvent until 2032. But Social Security is important, and although the President has already gone forward with the beginnings of a dialogue that he announced in Kansas City, I think it is important that Congress join it.

But let it be said that the President has already started this process of dialogue. It is important, however, that we not use this legislation to bicker and to generate confusion, because what we need most of all is the coming together of a variety of points. The previous speaker already indicated how many legislative initiatives he has offered. How many other Members can rise on the floor of the House and talk about efforts that they have engaged in to save Social Security? There will come a point where we will not have to or cannot stand any more making efforts to save Social Security, we will actually have to start saving Social Security. When we hit a crisis and 40 percent of our senior citizen population no longer has the income to survive, then

we will realize that talk was truly cheap.

On the personal savings account, I do not think we should start fixing Social Security until we know what the problems are with Social Security, other than the fact that it is moving toward insolvency. I do not know if PSAs are the way. Certainly many are inquiring about PSAs, but if it cripples the Social Security system, then that is not the way to go.

The Social Security system, when it started, was a curious vehicle. We have found, however, that it has been the saving source of keeping many of our senior citizens away from the brink of poverty. Therefore, we must look at it as the sacredness that it is. I believe that these discussions can go forward if they go forward collaboratively and cooperatively, because all of us will be challenged to save Social Security for America.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to make comment on H.R. 3546, a bill that would begin a National Dialogue on Social Security. The need for a dialogue is evidenced by the fact that the Board of Trustees for the Social Security has projected that on average over the next 75 years its expenditures will exceed its income by 17% and that by 2032 its trust funds will be depleted.

Because of this projected shortfall it is important that this Congress and this Administration does all that they can to prepare this government to meet the challenge of providing retirement benefits to seniors in the next century.

We know that the projected income rates for the Old Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance Social Security "trust funds" will be 13.33 percent with a projected cost to the Social Security Trust Funds of 15.52 percent leaving a 2.19 percent shortfall over the next 75 years.

This bill creates an eight-member bipartisan panel to recommend long-range changes to keep Social Security from going bankrupt, and directs the president and Congress to convene a national dialogue on the future of Social Security with help from members of private public interest groups.

There are those who say that there is no need to face the issue now, given the uncertainty of long-range forecasting. While others believe that the longer corrective action is delayed, the more drastic it will need to be. Although the 1996 Social Security Advisory Council, which issued a report on how to deal with the problem, was unable to agree on a specific plan, one of the issues its members did agree upon was that the sooner action was taken the better.

There are some concerns with the approach in this bill. This bill has the potential of duplicating the current national discussion about the future of Social Security which the President began in Kansas City and will continue through the end of 1998. This puts the process set up in the bill in competition with the process already underway.

What we do today may aid in the long term solvency of Social Security, but we must act in a timely and thoughtful manner. The bill directs that the House Speaker and the Senate Majority Leader would appoint four members of the commission while two will be appointed

by the president, and two by the House and Senate Minority Leaders. The bill requires the commission to report its legislative and administrative recommendations to Congress and the White House by February 1, 1999.

This bill has the potential of involving each Congressional District represented in this body. The bill requires each member of the Congress, "to the extent practicable," to develop, with grassroots organizations and other constituency groups within the member's district, ongoing systems of communication through the Internet and other electronic capabilities to assure the widest possible degree of receipt of public opinion.

I look forward to our continuing this dialogue on Social Security.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, I would inquire as to the time remaining on both sides of the aisle.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). The gentleman from Florida (Mr. DIAZ-BALART) has 5½ minutes remaining, and the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER) has 6 minutes remaining.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Washington (Mr. WHITE).

Mr. WHITE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, it was not too long ago that those of us here in this House were laboring under what I would like to say was a little bit of an illusion. There was a time when we thought it was really our job to solve all of the problems that were facing our Nation. Perhaps even worse, we thought we knew how to solve all the problems facing our Nation, and that if we just came up with the solution and got the votes for it, all of those problems will be solved. And I dare say, there are some people in this House who still believe that today.

But the fact is what this bill is about is a totally different approach, because what this bill is designed to do is to create the largest public debate in our Nation's history about how we should handle a particular problem. It is not designed for Washington, D.C., to teach everybody else what to do, it is designed for Washington, D.C., to learn in as many ways as we can what the people around the country think and what solutions they might have in mind for us for ways to fix this problem. It is a much different approach, it is a much better approach, and if we take it seriously, we will come up with a much better solution to our country's problems.

One of the things I am particularly pleased about in this bill is that it uses some new tools that we have not had in the past that are now at our disposal to find out what people think and what people know about some of these problems. Let me just go through a few of these, because I think probably even some of our fellow Members are not aware of them.

Number one, we are going to create a national Web site for every citizen with access to a computer can then hook

into this Web site and learn a lot of different things. One of the things that they will be able to do is to put their Social Security number or some financial information in a little interactive program and find out what their own personal retirement situation will look like under various proposals that we are adopting. They would be able to figure out how much they would have under the current Social Security system. They would be able to figure out how much they would have under competing proposals, about how different things would work. They will be able to gain a much better understanding about the issues that we are talking about than they would in any other way. I think that is a positive thing.

A couple of the other tools that we are going to have available at our disposal, we will have the ability to have moderated chat rooms so people can participate by computer in discussions of these issues. We will have a national town hall meeting on one or more occasions where people can tie in by modem and have a discussion of the issues. We will have an ability for them to go through an exercise on their computer so they can see what the impact on the Federal budget would be of taking one approach or another. So I think there are lots of things that we are going to learn from this process.

Personally, Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased at the process that this bill proposes. I think if we take it seriously, if we are open to it, if we really do listen to what the American people tell us about this process, we will come up with a much better solution than we otherwise would have had.

So I congratulate the authors of this bill on putting this together, and I urge the House to pass it, and the rule.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. HINCHEY).

Mr. HINCHEY. Mr. Speaker, Social Security is such a critically important program to every American that it ought to be examined from time to time, and we periodically ought to do whatever may be necessary to strengthen it to make sure that it continues to last.

This Democratic program, the invention of Franklin Roosevelt, has served several generations of Americans extremely well, and it will continue to do so so long as we nourish the economic conditions that are necessary to sustain it.

We learned something very important about Social Security just today. We learned that Social Security is directly tied to the national economy. When the economy is growing and doing well, when it is growing at a rate of 2½ percent or greater, Social Security does well. When we tighten up the economy in the ways that the Federal Reserve Board has attempted to do, for example, in some recent years, then we threaten Social Security as we threaten other public programs and threaten the economic health of all Americans as well.

So the first lesson that we ought to dictate to any commission that ought to be examining Social Security, and parenthetically let me say I am a little bit wary about these Social Security Commissions because the last one we had headed up by the now Chairman of the Federal Reserve did not do very much to save Social Security, and in some ways it weakened it. But that aside, when we examine Social Security, we ought to do so in a way that recognizes the symbiotic relationship between Social Security and the national economy. Having an economy that is based upon low interest rates, interest rates now are too high, the Federal Reserve should lower them, is not a good thing. A national economy that is growing at 2.5 to 3 percent will be an economy that has a strong Social Security system.

There are people here in this House who from time to time have raised issues that would not have strengthened Social Security, but would have, in fact, weakened it. We know that there have been discussions by the leadership on the other side to phase out Social Security, to raise the level of retirement age, to reduce the level of benefits as inflation increases over the years. Those things ought to be avoided.

Social Security is a strong system. What it needs is a strong economy. We need to be investing appropriately in the right kind of education for the next generation to make sure that they are capable of holding the kinds of jobs that provide the right kinds of salaries that will allow the economy to continue to grow.

So the first thing that we have to recognize is what we were told in the news that was released today. A strong economy is essential to the maintenance of the Social Security system. If we want the Social Security system to remain strong, it will do so, and we need to make sure that the economy is strong, and with a strong economy, Social Security will remain strong as well.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. NADLER).

(Mr. NADLER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to oppose this legislation because it is unnecessary, costly, and may be designed to lead the Congress to take more radical steps than are necessary to fix the relatively small and manageable problem facing Social Security.

Yesterday, the Social Security trustees revised their economic projections to show that Social Security is actually in better shape than they thought. The Trust Fund will be solvent through the year 2029. The trustees pushed back the projected insolvency date by 3 years and included other corrections to their extremely low projections of the past. In fact, the trustees yesterday admitted that there would be almost \$1

trillion more money in the system in 2020 than they said there would be last year, and they admitted that the long-term shortfall in the system is less than 2.2 percent of taxable payroll.

These revisions, however, are still overly pessimistic because they do not include the latest adjustments to the Consumer Price Index. They assume a long-term growth rate of only 1.3 percent, despite recent growth rates averaging 3 percent and 3.8 percent last year, and they assume that unemployment can never be below 6 percent, even though it has been about 4.5 percent for the last couple of years.

So not only is the problem facing Social Security small and manageable, but it is even smaller and more manageable than the trustees admit. It appears that the shortfall can be dealt with without raising the retirement age, without cutting benefits, and without radically changing the system with risky privatization schemes.

While I respect the desire to create a bipartisan body to help devise a comprehensive solution, I do not think we need a new blue ribbon commission to come between the American people and its elected representatives, after the last one we had 2 years ago. A national dialogue is already under way. We should let the system work, have the appropriate hearings and markups, and listen to our constituents, not some artificial panel of experts.

I also have more than a little suspicion that the unstated purpose of this resolution is to create a commission that will give an official blessing to the real and, I believe, pernicious and destructive goal of the exercise: Privatizing the Social Security system and shifting all of the risk from the government's budget to the shoulders of individuals, again risking abject poverty in old age.

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I hope that this is not the case. I hope that what is coming here is not a step to whipping up hysteria based on the false notion that the Social Security system is in imminent crisis, that it is going bankrupt, then hiding behind a commission and coming out with a radical scheme to destabilize the whole system.

Mr. Speaker, we should have faith that the ongoing debate will yield the information we need to forge sound legislation to enable Social Security to meet the challenges of the next century. We should also take steps to ensure the debate starts with a sound assessment of the problems facing Social Security, a small, manageable problem; a problem of less than 2.2 percent of taxable payroll; a problem that can be solved without shifting the risks from the budget of the Government of the United States to the shoulders of individuals and can be solved without increasing the retirement age, without reducing COLAs and without reducing benefits. It can be solved in fairly easy ways that we do not see in the public

debate. I distrust the composition of the commission.

One final thing: It is an outrage, when we are facing a shortfall in the Social Security system, this bill calls for financing the commission by taking money away from the trust fund and giving it to the commission. Leave the money in the trust fund for the beneficiaries.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentlewoman from Kentucky (Mrs. NORTHUP).

Mrs. NORTHUP. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in favor of the rule and in favor of House Resolution 3546.

Yesterday the board of trustees of the Social Security program issued a report stating that the Social Security Trust Fund will be exhausted by the year 2032. Mr. Speaker, we have heard all sorts of anecdotes that younger Americans believe they have less of a chance of cashing a Social Security check than they do of seeing aliens land on earth. These stories are somewhat humorous, but they foreshadow an impending crisis that is anything but funny.

We as a Congress can no longer afford to sit on our hands. We owe it to this generation and the next to secure our Social Security system and enhance retirement opportunities. Further, Americans must be encouraged to save and invest in their own retirement. That is why Congress should continue taking steps to provide individuals with more savings and investment opportunities.

In the meantime, Americans want to discuss the flaws within the current Social Security system and the options that exist for maintaining its solvency. House Resolution 3546 is vital to ensuring that all Americans have a voice in the upcoming debate.

In the midst of this national discussion, Congress will be expected to make exciting decisions to strengthen Social Security. The ideas of our constituents, both young and old, will help us make the right decisions for all of us.

Therefore, I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of the rule and House Resolution 3546.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I find it somewhat ironic that some Members on the other side of the aisle have questioned the fairness of the rule with which we bring forth this legislation, when an amendment was authorized by the rule as long as it was preprinted in the RECORD, an amendment was authorized by the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) or his designee, and no such amendment appears in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. I think that speaks for itself.

Mr. Speaker, it is a fair rule. The underlying legislation is important to the country.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered. The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Mr. ARCHER. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 410, I call up the bill (H.R. 3546) to provide for a national dialogue on Social Security and to establish the Bipartisan Panel to Design Long-Range Social Security Reform, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). The bill is considered read for amendment.

The text of H.R. 3546 is as follows:

H.R. 3546

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "National Dialogue on Social Security Act of 1998".

TITLE I—NATIONAL DIALOGUE ON SOCIAL SECURITY

SEC. 101. ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL DIALOGUE.

As soon as practicable after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Majority Leader of the Senate shall jointly convene a National Dialogue on the old-age, survivors, and disability insurance program under title II of the Social Security Act. The purpose of the National Dialogue shall be to engage, by means of regional conferences and national Internet exchanges, the American public in understanding the current program, the problems it faces, and the need to find solutions that will be workable for all generations and to generate comments, suggestions, and recommendations from the citizens for social security reform.

SEC. 102. FACILITATORS.

The National Dialogue conducted pursuant to section 101 shall operate under the administration and coordination of two Facilitators, one of whom shall be appointed by the President and one of whom shall be appointed jointly by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Majority Leader of the Senate. The Facilitators shall be appointed within 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act. The Facilitators shall be appointed from among individuals known for their integrity, impartiality, and good judgment, who are, by reason of their education, experience, and attainments, exceptionally qualified to perform the duties of such office. The Facilitators may serve until termination of the National Dialogue under section 108.

SEC. 103. PLANS FOR NATIONAL DIALOGUE.

After consultation with the President, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Majority Leader of the Senate, the Facilitators shall transmit the final plans for the development and operations of the National Dialogue to the President and each House of the Congress not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 104. DIALOGUE COUNCIL.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT AND DUTIES.—There is established a Dialogue Council. It shall be the duty of the Dialogue Council to advise the Facilitators in the development and operations of the National Dialogue.

(b) MEMBERSHIP.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Dialogue Council shall be composed of 36 of the individuals nominated pursuant to paragraph (2), of whom—

(A) 9 shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives,

(B) 9 shall be appointed by the Majority Leader of the Senate, and

(C) 18 shall be appointed by the President. To the extent practicable, the members shall include both men and women and shall be selected so as to ensure that individuals born before 1946, individuals born in or after 1946 and before 1961, and individuals born in or after 1961 are equally represented within the membership.

(2) **NOMINATIONS.**—Individuals shall be appointed under paragraph (1) from a group of 54 individuals, consisting of individuals nominated in sets of 3 each, respectively, by each of the following 18 private organizations:

(A) the American Association of Retired Persons;

(B) the United Seniors Association;

(C) the AFL-CIO;

(D) the National Hispanic Council on Aging;

(E) the Older Women's League;

(F) the Association of Private Pension and Welfare Plans;

(G) the Cato Institute;

(H) the Employee Benefit Research Institute;

(I) Americans Discuss Social Security;

(J) the Third Millennium;

(K) the U.S. Junior Chamber of Commerce;

(L) Americans for Hope, Growth, and Opportunity;

(M) the National Federation of Independent Businesses;

(N) the Concord Coalition;

(O) the National Caucus and Center on Black Aged;

(P) the Campaign for America's Future;

(Q) the Heritage Foundation; and

(R) the Brookings Institution.

(c) **ADMINISTRATION.**—The Dialogue Council shall meet at the call of the Facilitators. The Dialogue Council shall not be subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Members of the Council shall receive no pay, allowances, or benefits by reason of their service on the Council (other than any private funding of costs pursuant to section 105).

(d) **TERMINATION.**—The Dialogue Council shall terminate upon the termination of the National Dialogue under section 108.

SEC. 105. PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS.

The National Dialogue conducted pursuant to section 101 shall operate by means of sponsorship by private, nonpartisan organizations of conferences which shall be convened in localities across the Nation, which shall be geographically representative of the Nation as a whole, and which shall provide for participation which is representative of all age groups in the population. The Facilitators shall encourage and coordinate the sponsorship by such organizations of the National Dialogue and shall ensure that all costs relating to the functions of the Facilitators and the Dialogue Council under sections 104 and 107 and not referred to in section 109 are borne by such organizations or, as appropriate, by other private contributions.

SEC. 106. CONSTITUENCY INPUT.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—In order to assure that the widest possible degree of opinion is received by Members of Congress regarding the future of the old-age, survivors, and disability insurance program under title II of the Social Security Act, each Member shall, to the extent practicable, and as soon as possible after the date of the enactment of this Act, develop with grassroots organizations and other constituency groups within the Member's district ongoing systems of communication through the use of the Internet and other available electronic capabilities. Such groups shall include, but not be limited to, key opinion leaders, journalists, business

representatives, union members, and students of all age groups.

(b) **INTERNET DIALOGUE COORDINATION.**—

(1) **INTERNET DIALOGUE COORDINATOR.**—The Facilitators shall appoint an Internet Dialogue Coordinator who shall assist Members of Congress in establishing systems of communication in their Congressional districts as required under subsection (a). In carrying out the Coordinator's duties, the Coordinator shall—

(A) assist Members' offices in establishing local websites, moderated chat rooms, and threaded newsgroups,

(B) assist Members in coordinating a national electronic town hall meeting on the future of social security,

(C) advise Members regarding the most effective technological means for reaching out to constituent groups for purposes of this section, and

(D) work with other Internet-oriented groups to broaden the reach of Internet capability for purposes of this section.

(2) **INTERNET ADVISORY BOARD.**—

(A) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—There is established an Internet Advisory Board. It shall be the duty of the Board to advise the Internet Dialogue Coordinator in the most appropriate and effective means of employing the Internet under this section.

(B) **MEMBERSHIP.**—The Board shall consist of 3 members appointed by the Facilitators from among individuals recognized for their expertise relating to the Internet.

(C) **ADMINISTRATION.**—The Board shall meet at the call of the Internet Dialogue Coordinator. The Board shall not be subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Members of the Board shall receive no pay, allowances, or benefits by reason of their service on the Board, except that any member of the Board who is not otherwise an officer or employee of the Federal Government shall receive travel expenses and per diem in lieu of subsistence in accordance with sections 5702 and 5703 of title 5, United States Code.

(D) **TERMINATION.**—The Board shall terminate upon the termination of the National Dialogue under section 108.

(c) **REPORTS.**—The Internet Dialogue Coordinator shall periodically report in writing to the Facilitators the results of the systems of communication established pursuant to this section.

SEC. 107. REPORTS.

From time to time during the National Dialogue, the Facilitators shall catalog, summarize, and submit in writing to the Bipartisan Panel to Design Long-Range Social Security Reform the comments, suggestions, and recommendations generated by the participants in conferences conducted and constituent input received from Members' offices under the National Dialogue.

SEC. 108. TERMINATION.

The National Dialogue conducted pursuant to section 101 shall terminate January 1, 1999.

SEC. 109. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There are authorized to be appropriated, from amounts otherwise available in the general fund of the Treasury, such sums as are necessary to provide for the compensation of the Facilitators and to carry out the provisions of section 106.

TITLE II—BIPARTISAN PANEL TO DESIGN LONG-RANGE SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM

SEC. 201. ESTABLISHMENT OF PANEL.

There is established a panel to be known as the Bipartisan Panel to Design Long-Range Social Security Reform (in this title referred to as the "Panel").

SEC. 202. DUTIES OF PANEL.

The Panel shall design a single set of legislative and administrative recommenda-

tions for long-range reforms for restoring the solvency of the social security system and maintaining retirement income security in the United States.

SEC. 203. MEMBERSHIP OF THE PANEL.

(a) **NUMBER AND APPOINTMENT.**—The Panel shall be composed of eight members, of whom—

(1) four shall be appointed jointly by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Majority Leader of the Senate,

(2) two shall be appointed by the President, and

(3) two shall be appointed jointly by the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives and the Minority Leader of the Senate. The members of the Panel shall consist of individuals who are of recognized standing and distinction, who can represent the multiple generations who have a stake in the viability of the system, and who possess a demonstrated capacity to discharge the duties imposed on the Panel. At least one of the members shall be appointed from individuals representing the interests of employees, and at least one of the members shall be appointed from individuals representing the interests of employers.

(b) **CO-CHAIRS.**—The officials referred to in paragraphs (1) through (3) of subsection (a) shall designate two of the members of the Panel to serve as Co-Chairs of the Panel, who shall jointly chair the Panel, determine its duties, and supervise its staff.

(c) **TERMS OF APPOINTMENT.**—The members of the Panel shall serve for the life of the Panel.

(d) **VACANCIES.**—A vacancy in the Panel shall not affect the power of the remaining members to execute the duties of the Panel, but any such vacancy shall be filled in the same manner in which the original appointment was made.

SEC. 204. PROCEDURES.

(a) **MEETINGS.**—The Panel shall meet at the call of its Co-Chairs or a majority of its members.

(b) **QUORUM.**—A quorum shall consist of 5 members of the Panel, except that a lesser number may conduct a hearing under subsection (c).

(c) **HEARINGS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES.**—For the purpose of carrying out its duties, the Panel may hold such hearings and undertake such other activities as the Panel determines to be necessary to carry out its duties. Meetings held in order to conduct fact finding, as determined by the Co-Chairs, shall be open to the public. Meetings held in order to develop policy, as determined by the Co-Chairs, may be held in executive session, notwithstanding the Federal Advisory Committee Act and any other provision of law.

(d) **OBTAINING INFORMATION.**—Upon request of the Panel, the Commissioner of Social Security and the head of any other agency or instrumentality of the Federal Government shall furnish information deemed necessary by the Panel to enable it to carry out its duties.

SEC. 205. ADMINISTRATION.

(a) **COMPENSATION.**—Except as provided in subsection (b), members of the Panel shall receive no additional pay, allowances, or benefits by reason of their service on the Panel.

(b) **TRAVEL EXPENSES AND PER DIEM.**—Each member of the Panel who is not a present Member of the Congress and who is not otherwise an officer or employee of the Federal Government shall receive travel expenses and per diem in lieu of subsistence in accordance with sections 5702 and 5703 of title 5, United States Code.

(c) **STAFF AND SUPPORT SERVICES.**—

(1) **STAFF DIRECTOR.**—

(A) **APPOINTMENT.**—The Panel shall appoint a staff director of the Panel.

(B) **COMPENSATION.**—The staff director shall be paid at a rate not to exceed the rate established for level III of the Executive Schedule.

(2) **STAFF.**—The Panel shall appoint such additional personnel as the Panel determines to be necessary.

(3) **APPLICABILITY OF CIVIL SERVICE LAWS.**—The staff director and other members of the staff of the Panel shall be appointed without regard to the provisions of title 5, United States Code, governing appointments in the competitive service, and shall be paid without regard to the provisions of chapter 51 and subchapter III of chapter 53 of such title relating to classification and General Schedule pay rates.

(4) **EXPERTS AND CONSULTANTS.**—With the approval of the Panel, the staff director may procure temporary and intermittent services under section 3109(b) of title 5, United States Code.

(d) **CONTRACT AUTHORITY.**—The Panel may contract with and compensate government and private agencies or persons for items and services, without regard to section 3709 of the Revised Statutes (41 U.S.C. 5).

(e) **PHYSICAL FACILITIES.**—The Architect of the Capitol, in consultation with the appropriate entities in the legislative branch, shall locate and provide suitable office space for the operation of the Panel on a reimbursable basis. The facilities shall serve as the headquarters of the Panel and shall include all necessary equipment and incidentals required for the proper functioning of the Panel.

(f) **DETAIL OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES.**—Upon the request of the Panel, the head of any Federal agency may detail, on a reimbursable basis, any of the personnel of such agency to the Panel to assist the Panel in carrying out its duties.

(g) **USE OF MAILS.**—The Panel may use the United States mails in the same manner and under the same conditions as Federal agencies and shall, for purposes of the frank, be considered a commission of Congress as described in section 3215 of title 39, United States Code.

(h) **ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SERVICES.**—Upon the request of the Panel, the Architect of the Capitol shall provide to the Panel on a reimbursable basis such administrative support services as the Panel may request.

(i) **PRINTING.**—For purposes of costs relating to printing and binding, including the cost of personnel detailed from the Government Printing Office, the Panel shall be deemed to be a committee of the Congress.

SEC. 206. REPORT.

Not later than February 1, 1999, the Panel shall submit to the President, the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives, and the Committee on Finance of the Senate a report which shall contain a detailed statement of the findings and conclusions of the Panel, including the set of recommendations required under section 202. The report shall include only those recommendations of the Panel that receive the approval of at least 6 members of the Panel, including both Co-Chairs.

SEC. 207. TERMINATION.

The Panel shall terminate March 31, 1999.

SEC. 208. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS. There are authorized to be appropriated from the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Trust Fund such sums as are necessary to carry out the purposes of this title, but not to exceed \$2,000,000.

The **SPEAKER** pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 410, the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute printed in the bill, modified by the amendments printed in House Report 105-498, is adopted.

The text of the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute, modified by the amendments printed in House Report 105-498, is as follows:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “National Dialogue on Social Security Act of 1998”.

TITLE I—NATIONAL DIALOGUE ON SOCIAL SECURITY

SEC. 101. ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL DIALOGUE.

As soon as practicable after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Majority Leader of the Senate shall jointly convene a National Dialogue on the old-age, survivors, and disability insurance program under title II of the Social Security Act. The purpose of the National Dialogue shall be to engage, by means of regional conferences and national Internet exchanges, the American public in understanding the current program, the problems it faces, and the need to find solutions that will be workable for all generations and to generate comments, suggestions, and recommendations from the citizens for social security reform.

SEC. 102. FACILITATORS.

The National Dialogue conducted pursuant to section 101 shall operate under the administration and coordination of two Facilitators, one of whom shall be appointed by the President, in consultation with the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives and the Minority Leader of the Senate, and one of whom shall be appointed jointly by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Majority Leader of the Senate. The Facilitators shall be appointed within 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act. The Facilitators shall be appointed from among individuals known for their integrity, impartiality, and good judgment, who are, by reason of their education, experience, and attainments, exceptionally qualified to perform the duties of such office. The Facilitators may serve until termination of the National Dialogue under section 108.

SEC. 103. PLANS FOR NATIONAL DIALOGUE.

After consultation with the President, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, the Majority Leader of the Senate, and the Minority Leader of the Senate, the Facilitators shall transmit the final plans for the development and operations of the National Dialogue to the President and each House of the Congress not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 104. DIALOGUE COUNCIL.

(a) **ESTABLISHMENT AND DUTIES.**—There is established a Dialogue Council. It shall be the duty of the Dialogue Council to advise the Facilitators in the development and operations of, and to promote nationwide participation in the National Dialogue.

(b) MEMBERSHIP.—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Dialogue Council shall be composed of 36 of the individuals nominated pursuant to paragraph (2), of whom—

(A) 9 shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives,

(B) 4 shall be appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives,

(C) 9 shall be appointed by the Majority Leader of the Senate,

(D) 4 shall be appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate, and

(E) 10 shall be appointed by the President.

To the extent practicable, the members shall include both men and women and shall be selected so as to ensure that individuals born before 1946, individuals born in or after 1946 and before 1961, and individuals born in or after 1961 are equally represented within the membership.

(2) **NOMINATIONS.**—Individuals shall be appointed under paragraph (1) from a group of 54 individuals, consisting of individuals nominated in sets of 2 each, respectively, by each of the following 27 private organizations:

(A) American Association of Retired Persons;

(B) United Seniors Association;

(C) American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations;

(D) The National Hispanic Council on Aging;

(E) The Older Women's League;

(F) Association of Private Pension and Welfare Plans;

(G) Cato Institute;

(H) Employee Benefit Research Institute;

(I) Americans Discuss Social Security;

(J) Third Millennium;

(K) The U.S. Junior Chamber of Commerce;

(L) Americans for Hope, Growth, and Opportunity;

(M) National Federation of Independent Businesses;

(N) The Concord Coalition;

(O) National Caucus and Center on Black Aged;

(P) Campaign for America's Future;

(Q) The Heritage Foundation;

(R) The Brookings Institution;

(S) The 2030 Center;

(T) National Council of Senior Citizens;

(U) Center on Budget and Policy Priorities;

(V) National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare;

(W) United States Chamber of Commerce;

(X) Pension Rights Center;

(Y) Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities and

(Z) National Association of Manufacturers; and

(AA) National Association for the Self-Employed.

(c) **ADMINISTRATION.**—The Dialogue Council shall meet at the call of the Facilitators. The Dialogue Council shall be subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Members of the Council shall receive no pay, allowances, or benefits by reason of their service on the Council (other than any private funding of costs pursuant to section 105).

(d) **TERMINATION.**—The Dialogue Council shall terminate upon the termination of the National Dialogue under section 108.

SEC. 105. PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS.

The National Dialogue conducted pursuant to section 101 shall operate by means of sponsorship by private, nonpartisan organizations of conferences which shall be convened in localities across the Nation, which shall be geographically representative of the Nation as a whole, and which shall provide for participation which is representative of all age groups in the population. The Facilitators shall encourage and coordinate the sponsorship by such organizations of the National Dialogue and shall ensure that all costs relating to the functions of the Facilitators and the Dialogue Council under sections 104 and 107 and not referred to in section 109 are borne by such organizations or, as appropriate, by other private contributions. The source and amounts of contributions made pursuant to this section shall be made available to the public.

SEC. 106. CONSTITUENCY INPUT.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—In order to assure that the widest possible degree of opinion is received by Members of Congress regarding the future of the old-age, survivors, and disability insurance program under title II of the Social Security Act, each Member may, in connection with the National Dialogue, develop with grassroots organizations and other constituency groups within the Member's district ongoing systems of communication through the use of the Internet and other available electronic capabilities. Such groups include, but are not limited to, key opinion leaders, journalists, business representatives, union members, and students of all age groups.

(b) INTERNET DIALOGUE COORDINATION.—

(1) INTERNET DIALOGUE COORDINATOR.—The Facilitators shall appoint an Internet Dialogue Coordinator who shall assist Members of Congress in establishing systems of communication as described in subsection (a). In carrying out the Coordinator's duties, the Coordinator shall—

(A) establish a national dialogue web site,

(B) assist Members' offices in establishing connections to the national dialogue web site, which may include, but is not limited to, personal financial planning, Federal budget impact exercises, ongoing public opinion tallies regarding legislative proposals, moderated chat rooms, and threaded newsgroups.

(C) assist Members in coordinating a national electronic town hall meeting on the future of social security,

(D) advise Members regarding the most effective technological means for reaching out to constituent groups for purposes of this section, and

(E) work with other Internet-oriented groups to broaden the reach of Internet capability for purposes of this section.

(2) INTERNET ADVISORY BOARD.—

(A) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established an Internet Advisory Board. It shall be the duty of the Board to advise the Internet Dialogue Coordinator in the most appropriate and effective means of employing the Internet under this section.

(B) MEMBERSHIP.—The Board shall consist of 3 members appointed by the Facilitators from among individuals recognized for their expertise relating to the Internet.

(C) ADMINISTRATION.—The Board shall meet at the call of the Internet Dialogue Coordinator. The Board shall be subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Members of the Board shall receive no pay, allowances, or benefits by reason of their service on the Board, except that any member of the Board who is not otherwise an officer or employee of the Federal Government shall receive travel expenses and per diem in lieu of subsistence in accordance with sections 5702 and 5703 of title 5, United States Code.

(c) REPORTS.—The Internet Dialogue Coordinator shall periodically report in writing to the Facilitators the results of the systems of communication established pursuant to this section.

(d) TERMINATION.—The provisions of this section shall terminate upon the termination of the National Dialogue under section 108.

SEC. 107. REPORTS.

From time to time during the National Dialogue, the Facilitators shall catalog, summarize, and submit in writing to the Bipartisan Panel to Design Long-Range Social Security Reform the comments, suggestions, and recommendations generated by the participants in conferences conducted and constituent input received from Members' offices under the National Dialogue.

SEC. 108. TERMINATION.

The National Dialogue conducted pursuant to section 101 shall terminate January 1, 1999.

SEC. 109. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There are authorized to be appropriated, from amounts otherwise available in the general fund of the Treasury, such sums as are necessary to provide for the compensation of the Facilitators and to carry out the provisions of section 106.

TITLE II—BIPARTISAN PANEL TO DESIGN LONG-RANGE SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM

SEC. 201. ESTABLISHMENT OF PANEL.

There is established a panel to be known as the Bipartisan Panel to Design Long-Range Social Security Reform (in this title referred to as the "Panel").

SEC. 202. DUTIES OF PANEL.

The Panel shall design a single set of legislative and administrative recommendations for long-range reforms for restoring the solvency of the social security system and maintaining retirement income security in the United States.

SEC. 203. MEMBERSHIP OF THE PANEL.

(a) NUMBER AND APPOINTMENT.—The Panel shall be composed of eight members, of whom—

(1) four shall be appointed jointly by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Majority Leader of the Senate,

(2) two shall be appointed by the President, and

(3) two shall be appointed jointly by the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives and the Minority Leader of the Senate.

The members of the Panel shall consist of individuals who are of recognized standing and distinction, who can represent the multiple generations who have a stake in the viability of the system, and who possess a demonstrated capacity to discharge the duties imposed on the Panel. At least one of the members shall be appointed from individuals representing the interests of employees, and at least one of the members shall be appointed from individuals representing the interests of employers.

(b) CO-CHAIRS.—The officials referred to in paragraphs (1) through (3) of subsection (a) shall designate two of the members of the Panel to serve as Co-Chairs of the Panel, who shall jointly chair the Panel, determine its duties, and supervise its staff.

(c) TERMS OF APPOINTMENT.—The members of the Panel shall serve for the life of the Panel.

(d) VACANCIES.—A vacancy in the Panel shall not affect the power of the remaining members to execute the duties of the Panel, but any such vacancy shall be filled in the same manner in which the original appointment was made.

SEC. 204. PROCEDURES.

(a) MEETINGS.—The Panel shall meet at the call of its Co-Chairs or a majority of its members.

(b) QUORUM.—A quorum shall consist of 5 members of the Panel, except that a lesser number may conduct a hearing under subsection (c).

(c) HEARINGS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES.—For the purpose of carrying out its duties, the Panel may hold such hearings and undertake such other activities as the Panel determines to be necessary to carry out its duties. Meetings held by the Panel shall be conducted in accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

(d) OBTAINING INFORMATION.—Upon request of the Panel, the Commissioner of Social Security and the head of any other agency or instrumentality of the Federal Government shall furnish information deemed necessary by the Panel to enable it to carry out its duties.

SEC. 205. ADMINISTRATION.

(a) COMPENSATION.—Except as provided in subsection (b), members of the Panel shall receive no additional pay, allowances, or benefits by reason of their service on the Panel.

(b) TRAVEL EXPENSES AND PER DIEM.—Each member of the Panel who is not a present Member of the Congress and who is not otherwise an officer or employee of the Federal Government shall receive travel expenses and per diem in lieu of subsistence in accordance with sections 5702 and 5703 of title 5, United States Code.

(c) STAFF AND SUPPORT SERVICES.—

(1) STAFF DIRECTOR.—

(A) APPOINTMENT.—The Panel shall appoint a staff director of the Panel.

(B) COMPENSATION.—The staff director shall be paid at a rate not to exceed the rate established for level III of the Executive Schedule.

(2) STAFF.—The Panel shall appoint such additional personnel as the Panel determines to be necessary.

(3) APPLICABILITY OF CIVIL SERVICE LAWS.—The staff director and other members of the staff of the Panel shall be appointed without regard to the provisions of title 5, United States Code, governing appointments in the competitive service, and shall be paid without regard to the provisions of chapter 51 and subchapter III of chapter 53 of such title relating to classification and General Schedule pay rates.

(4) EXPERTS AND CONSULTANTS.—With the approval of the Panel, the staff director may pro-

cure temporary and intermittent services under section 3109(b) of title 5, United States Code.

(d) CONTRACT AUTHORITY.—The Panel may contract with and compensate government and private agencies or persons for items and services, without regard to section 3709 of the Revised Statutes (41 U.S.C. 5).

(e) PHYSICAL FACILITIES.—The Architect of the Capitol, in consultation with the appropriate entities in the legislative branch, shall locate and provide suitable office space for the operation of the Panel on a reimbursable basis. The facilities shall serve as the headquarters of the Panel and shall include all necessary equipment and incidentals required for the proper functioning of the Panel.

(f) DETAIL OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES.—Upon the request of the Panel, the head of any Federal agency may detail, on a reimbursable basis, any of the personnel of such agency to the Panel to assist the Panel in carrying out its duties.

(g) USE OF MAILS.—The Panel may use the United States mails in the same manner and under the same conditions as Federal agencies and shall, for purposes of the frank, be considered a commission of Congress as described in section 3215 of title 39, United States Code.

(h) ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SERVICES.—Upon the request of the Panel, the Architect of the Capitol shall provide to the Panel on a reimbursable basis such administrative support services as the Panel may request.

(i) PRINTING.—For purposes of costs relating to printing and binding, including the cost of personnel detailed from the Government Printing Office, the Panel shall be deemed to be a committee of the Congress.

SEC. 206. REPORT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than February 1, 1999, the Panel shall submit to the President, the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives, and the Committee on Finance of the Senate a report which shall contain a detailed statement of the findings and conclusions of the Panel, including the set of recommendations required under section 202. The report shall include only those recommendations of the Panel that receive the approval of at least 6 members of the Panel, including both Co-Chairs.

(b) SENSE OF THE CONGRESS.—It is the sense of the Congress that, pending the report of the Panel under subsection (a), the Federal unified budget surplus should be dedicated to reducing the Federal debt held by the public, increasing the retirement income security of individuals and insuring the solvency of the social security system.

SEC. 207. TERMINATION.

The Panel shall terminate March 31, 1999.

SEC. 208. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There are authorized to be appropriated from the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Trust Fund such sums as are necessary to carry out the purposes of this title, but not to exceed \$2,000,000.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARCHER) and the gentlewoman from Connecticut (MRS. KENNELLY) each will control 1 hour and 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARCHER).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ARCHER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the bill, H.R. 3546, and to include extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. ARCHER. Mr. Speaker, it is my intention to yield back 30 minutes of my time, but before I do so I would like to inquire of the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Mrs. KENNELLY) whether the minority would do the same thing.

Mrs. KENNELLY of Connecticut. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we will yield back 30 minutes of our time.

Mr. ARCHER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back 30 minutes of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, for tens of millions of Americans, Social Security has been a wonderful success. It has been for my father and for my mother. Written in 1935, Social Security has protected our seniors, has reduced poverty and strengthened our families. If ever there was a Depression-era program we can be proud of, Social Security is it.

But Social Security faces a long-term crisis. To solve it, politicians in Washington must begin now to work together and we must put partisanship aside. We are all in this together, from the 117-year-old Sara Knauss of Allentown, Pennsylvania, reportedly the oldest living American, to little Chase Amanda Brockman who was born today at 12:30 p.m. in Hermann Hospital in Houston, Texas.

As we proceed, we must do two things. We must honor our commitments to today's seniors and we must protect young people so that Social Security works for them as well.

The Congressional Research Service has analyzed for retirees this year the amount of time it takes to recover the value of their taxes paid plus interest. The information demonstrates that Social Security has been a fabulous program for those who have retired to date.

But for baby boomers and for everyone younger, Social Security is no longer a fair deal. For average earners who retired in 1980, they got back their retirement portion of their Social Security taxes and their employer's share of the taxes plus interest compounded during their work life when they turned 68, and that has got to be a good deal. Three years and they had recovered everything that had been paid in plus interest.

But what is it today? Today, a retiree at 65 years of age, making \$25,000 a year, will have to live until they are 80 years old before they get their money back. For most people, that is still not a bad deal.

But I am afraid the good deal ends right around this year. For tens of millions of working people younger than 65, Social Security's problems have already begun. Average earning 48-year-olds will have to live to 89 years of age to get their money back. Average 38-year-olds will have to make it to 91.

If Americans are younger than that, Social Security's message seems to be, "Be sure to eat well and get plenty of exercise, because you will have to live into your hundreds get a fair return on

your Social Security money that has been taken out of your paycheck."

Mr. Speaker, we cannot raise taxes to solve this problem because someone making more than \$65,000 a year can really forget about it. 48-year-olds making \$65,000, the maximum taxable wage base, will have to reach 104 years old to get their money back, and 38-year-olds will have to live to 117 years of age.

Now there is more to Social Security than money. There is family security, family protection and peace of mind. However, each generation must be treated fairly and that is the challenge that we face. That is why today I urge the House to pass my plan to create a bipartisan panel to save Social Security.

The time has come to rise above partisan politics and put the needs of the Nation first. Without a commission, I am absolutely certain that politicians will once again start fighting over Social Security as has always been the case in the past, and we will not get the job done. We must remove politics from Social Security, and that is what my plan does.

Mr. Speaker, my plan creates an eight-member panel comprised of four Democrats and four Republicans. It is small and its timetable is short. Its recommendations are due back to the Congress by February 1, 1999. My plan also creates a bipartisan national dialogue to engage the American people as we listen to their ideas on how to save this vital program.

Saving Social Security is too important for any one party or any one branch of government to use it as a forum for gaining political advantage. The American people have never retreated from a crisis, and we must not do so in this issue. Our task is to solve this problem so that when little Chase Amanda grows up and starts working, she will never even know Social Security was in crisis.

When it comes to Social Security, I suspect the American people are well ahead of us. We now must catch up with the people and do it in a bipartisan spirit, remembering that young people have grandparents they love and senior citizens have grandchildren that they adore. I know because I have 13 of them myself. Mr. Speaker, we are in this together.

Let me add one more point. This week we received letters from both the American Association of Retired Persons, AARP, and the Concord Coalition, strongly endorsing this bill. They are very much at the front line on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I submit these letters for the RECORD:

AARP,

Washington, DC, April 28, 1998.

Hon. BILL ARCHER,

Chairman, Committee on Ways and Means, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN ARCHER: AARP believes that a national dialogue on Social Security is essential to building consensus around changes to address the program's long-term

financial challenge. As the national dialogue on Social Security proceeds, the American people need to understand how Social Security fits into an overall framework of income security, what the solvency options are, and how these options will affect them and their families.

Accordingly, AARP is very pleased that the Committee on Ways and Means has reported H.R. 3546, the National Dialogue on Social Security Act. This legislation can help the American people work through the necessary tradeoffs that can enhance economic security and restore the Social Security program's long-term solvency.

While our elected officials engage in a dialogue with the American people, the Bipartisan Panel to Design Long-Range Social Security Reform called for under H.R. 3546 can evaluate options and suggest a course of action. Of course, whatever the panel proposes must still be debated and approved by Congress and the President. This would allow policy makers and interested parties an opportunity to evaluate and respond to the panel's recommendations. In the final analysis, elected officials, not a commission, must bear the ultimate responsibility.

AARP believes dialogue, debate, and a comprehensive analysis of Social Security solvency proposals are necessary components of good public policy-making for this important family protection program. If we act sooner, rather than later, the changes we adopt will be more moderate and those affected will have more time to adjust their plans. AARP looks forward to working with you and other members of Congress on a bipartisan basis to promote this national dialogue.

Sincerely,

HORACE B. DEETS.

THE CONCORD COALITION

CITIZENS' COUNCIL,

Washington, DC, April 28, 1998.

Hon. BILL ARCHER,

Chairman, Committee on Ways and Means, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN ARCHER: The Concord Coalition strongly supports the bill, H.R. 3546, the National Dialogue on Social Security Act of 1998, that your Committee reported favorably last week.

The Social Security program, as currently structured, faces serious problems when the baby boom generation begins retiring only a decade from now. It is urgent that solutions be put in place as soon as possible to address these problems, rather than postponing action. The earlier we act, the more gradually changes can be phased in and the more advance warning will be given to people who are working today so that they can understand the impact of these changes and plan for their own retirement security. Retired citizens, working age Americans and today's youth all will be better off if action is taken soon.

Based on our experience hosting meetings around the nation on this issue, we are convinced that if the American people are armed with the facts and given the opportunity for honest dialogue, they will reach decisions that are fair to people of all ages and income groups. Your bill to stimulate such honest dialogue and engage a broad range of citizens across the nation is the right step at the right time. In order to prepare our nation's citizens for the kind of changes required to put Social Security on a sound footing through the next century, they need to hear what the issues are and the pros and cons of various options. We applaud your bill for advancing such a balanced, bipartisan dialogue.

We are pleased that your bill recognizes that next year, 1999, is the idea window of opportunity for enacting Social Security reforms. Your bill offers a framework for moving toward a legislative consensus on what these reforms should be.

The Concord Coalition looks forward to working with you to implement the provisions of H.R. 3546.

Sincerely,

MARTHA PHILLIPS,
Executive Director.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell my colleagues what this is not about. This is not about the ultimate plan to save Social Security. This is not about how we can get partisan political advantage by launching into a debate amongst ourselves, as has happened so often in the past.

This is how we chart a course that gives us the best chance to rise above politics and to be able to truly save Social Security. We will hear many, many other comments made today that have nothing to do with this bill because people want to make one comment or another comment about their view on Social Security.

We should come together today to establish a vehicle that gives this country the best hope, the best chance to rise above partisan politics and to save Social Security. I would dare say that those of my colleagues who have, I think sincerely and genuinely, said we should dig into this ourselves, we do not need another commission, where is their plan? Has any one of them introduced a comprehensive plan to save Social Security? I will tell my colleagues they have not because they understand the politics. I would hope that they would not attempt to gain some type of political advantage out of this debate rather than joining in today and giving us our best hope.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair would inquire, was the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) going to yield back 30 minutes as the majority has?

Mr. RANGEL. Yes, I will.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New York yields back 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL).

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I say, "Shame, Mr. Chairman, to think that politics would be brought into this debate." Why, I am just shocked and overwhelmed that the majority would even mention politics in the dialogue on such a sensitive subject.

Mr. Speaker, there is no question that we could not even begin to deal with the question of Social Security unless it is done in a bipartisan way, no more than we can deal with the question of our complex income tax system unless it is done in a bipartisan way. The problem that we are facing is that the Republicans are operating like a parliamentary body and we do not

talk to each other and discuss how we can resolve some of these very sensitive issues.

Let us take this dialogue that we are talking about today. Members of the minority only asked the question that before we do anything, can we say that our first commitment with the surplus is to use it to make the Social Security solvent? Why, that is as bipartisan as it can get. All of America wants to make certain that before we explore different ways in order to assure people pensions, that at least this system is solvent.

Of course, that brings about a lot of partisan debate and we try to overcome that.

□ 1615

But certainly, even though many of us in the minority did not truly believe that there was need for another group to have dialogue since the President already had established a biparty commission, in the interest of bipartisanship, I would like to join with the chairman of the committee, and let us have another commission, and let us expand the dialogue.

But to suggest that it is possible to bring politics into the debate, why, my God, we almost resolved the question of income tax increases the other day in a request from the majority to ask for a supermajority in order to increase taxes. Why just today we tackled the serious drug problem that we had by saying that we were banning funding for needles. I mean, that is substantive, and we are moving the ball forward.

When this year has ended, the majority will be asked: What did you do on Social Security? I am certain that the majority would be able to say, we started dialogue.

I just hope one thing before we attempt to even talk as though we are partisan is that, when they ask, what have you done with the tax system, the one that we are pulling up by the roots, the one that we are sunsetting, the one that we are bringing in the postal card substitute, when we ask this bipartisan Congress, what are we doing about taxes, we will be able to say, we are establishing dialogue, because that is going to be my answer.

I have been in the minority for 3 years. I know how the chairman feels so strongly about this complex system that was compounded in the last tax bill. The gentleman and I know we have to get rid of it.

We have had 3 years of dialogue, 3 years of the majority of the Republicans, 3 years that they have the votes in the committee, 3 years that they have the votes in the House, 3 years that they have the votes on the Senate Committee on Finance, 3 years as they have the votes on the Senate floor to improve this tax system.

If Members feel nearly as strongly about this Social Security mess as the majority has about the Nation's tax system, my God, the gentleman from Texas and I both will be retired by the

time we deal with it. You are only going to stay for another couple of years, and I do not know how long I will be here as chairman, but regardless of what the politics of this are going to be, it would seem that we ought to start now in a bipartisan way and say that we do not want this dialogue to go on as long as we have had for the tax bill.

Let the dialogue begin, but let us put a timetable so Americans would know that this Congress, in a bipartisan way, is going to tackle the serious problem. Before we go to Las Vegas or Wall Street or wherever we think where we can get a high return on the investment, let us make certain that the idea of Franklin Roosevelt is protected; and that is, we have a sound Social Security system, and we are going to use the surplus to do that.

Now, if that is not done, then the surplus is going to be used for an income tax cut, or they are going to just raise tobacco tax on this industry that has done very little to anybody and just raise their taxes for another income tax cut. The gentleman and I do not like that because we are both against tax increases.

So here is another way we can be bipartisan, to give up how we raise the revenue and how we use them. I do not know how my colleagues want to use the surplus. I know the Committee on the Budget chairman does not want to use it for a tax cut.

The gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KASICH) is a man after my own heart. When he says a tax cut, he means \$150 billion. That is no slice of bologna. That is big time. When he says, where are we going to get the money, he is not going to the surplus, he is going to spending programs so that we all will know, that those who get the cut will know where the cut came from. That is the way we do business in a bipartisan way.

Here we are with Social Security, and we have a surplus. The President said, let us not get partisan with this. Take the surplus, attach it to Social Security, and then let us get on and see how we can do the rest of the people's work.

Let me join with the chairman of the distinguished Committee on Ways and Means. Let this be the first shot toward bipartisanship. Let us all say openly that the surplus is going to be used to shore up this system. Let us tell this Commission this is what we expect them to do. Let us give them a date to report back.

I wish we could do it before the election, but this is too serious a thing, I think, to be involved with elections. We will wait until after the elections. But let us put a timetable on this Commission, because we do not know who is going to be appointed, and we want them to be as nonpartisan as my colleagues and I in their deliberation.

I thank the gentleman from Texas for raising the question, for taking politics out of that, and give me the opportunity to join with him.

Mr. Speaker, I yield the balance of my time to the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. KENNELLY).

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATOURETTE). The gentlewoman of Connecticut (Mrs. KENNELLY) will control the balance of the time.

Mr. ARCHER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. BUNNING), the respected chairman of the Subcommittee on Social Security of the Committee on Ways and Means.

(Mr. BUNNING asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. Speaker, since its inception, Social Security has been a real success story, providing retirement income security for seniors and desperately needed survivor and disability benefits for those who have been stricken by the death of a loved one or smitten by an incapacitating illness or accident.

However, as the board of trustees reminded us yesterday, the future is not so bright for this vital program. We know Social Security faces real challenges over the long run. It has been told before, but by the year 2032, the program outlays will exceed its income, and Social Security will have to rely on the rest of the government to make good on their promise to secure Social Security trust funds.

By the year 2032, the surplus will be gone, and the program will only be able to pay about 75 percent of the benefits committed. We cannot allow that to happen.

During this Congress, the Subcommittee on Social Security, which I chair, is conducting a series of hearings on the future of Social Security for this generation and the next. We have had many hearings and will hold many more throughout the year. We are working on a bipartisan basis to explore all sides and all options for Social Security reform.

Fixing this vital program is not going to be easy. Social Security programs are complex and far-reaching. Even minor changes will have major intended and unintended effects over time. It will not be an easy issue to resolve.

I am glad that the President has brought Social Security to the forefront. His leadership on this issue is of vital importance. But when it comes time, it is going to be the Congress of the United States, starting with the Committee on Ways and Means, that will have to do the heavy lifting and actually begin the work of the American people.

In the meantime, when it comes right down to it, we have to get this conversation started. We all need to be talking about what the future of Social Security is, what is going to take place, and what it is going to look like.

The legislation we are considering today gets people talking through a national dialogue on Social Security. That is a very good beginning. At the

same time, we need a panel of experts to help us reconcile what Americans want to see done and what can be done to fix Social Security once and for all.

Election years often see more than their fair share of partisan bickering. Social Security is far too important to get tied up in partisan politics. We must act now. We must work together. This legislation is a way to do it. Make no mistake about it, we have a golden opportunity this year to do something. The alligators are not snapping at our ankles right now. We have a balanced budget for the first time in 30 years, and we have budget surpluses instead of nagging deficits. Medicare is at least safe for 13 more years. Welfare has been reformed, and it seems to be working.

Right now, we have a golden opportunity to focus on Social Security and get the train rolling, get Congress firmly on the track for reform before we face a crisis. Let us do it in the next 5 to 7 years when we have the opportunity with growing surpluses. This is the bill to do it.

Mrs. KENNELLY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I might consume.

Mr. Speaker, this bill proposes good ideas, but they are postscript for what is already happening. For example, the legislation calls for a national dialogue on Social Security, but there are already several reputable organizations convening nonpartisan meetings across the country to discuss the future of Social Security. The President, Members of Congress from both parties, and thousands of American citizens have already attended some of these informative sessions.

Let me give just one example. The Pew Charitable Trusts are spending \$12.5 million to establish a nationwide nonpartisan grassroots discussion of the future of Social Security. To date, more than 3,000 Americans in 15 States have participated in their seminars.

The other purpose of this bill is to establish a commission to develop suggestions on maintaining Social Security solvency. But, again, Congress has already received three recommendations for Social Security reform from the last Commission that was appointed.

If we really want to do something to protect Social Security's long-range solvency, we should do what the President has asked us to do, save the budget surplus for Social Security. Saving the budget surplus will ensure that we have the necessary resources to protect a retirement program that millions of Americans depend upon.

Some have suggested we should use the budget surplus instead for a new system of private accounts. My response to that is we should keep an old promise before we make new ones. The bill before us today takes at least a half a step towards acknowledging that principle by expressing the sense of Congress that the budget surplus should be dedicated to ensuring the solvency of the Social Security system,

increasing retirement income security, and paying down the Federal debt. We should strengthen that language so that there is absolutely no doubt on what we intend to do with the budget surplus of Social Security.

I know that some have expressed confusion over what this means when we talk about saving Social Security. The concept is actually very simple. If we allocate current and future budget surpluses for other purposes, those resources will not be there for Social Security. The President has, therefore, asked us to save the budget surplus today so we can save Social Security in the future.

What happens to the budget surplus before we agree on a plan to protect Social Security, we might then ask? The answer is easy: It will help pay down the Federal debt.

Let me remind my colleagues that reducing the Federal debt will have a direct and positive impact on our ability to meet our obligations of Social Security. Paying down the debt will, not only spur economic growth, but it will reduce the amount the government pays in interest, which is now 15 percent of all government spending, last year totaling \$244 billion.

In fact, the Congressional Budget Office estimates that \$1 billion decrease in the debt today could reduce the government interest payments over the next 10 years by \$773 million. This statistic clearly illustrates that paying today's debt will help us meet our obligations of tomorrow's retirees. So once again, I urge my colleagues to support the President's pledge, save Social Security first.

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SHAW).

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, I rise in very strong support for H.R. 3546, the National Dialogue on Social Security Act of 1998.

This bill would initiate the national dialogue on the future of Social Security by way of face-to-face discussion and electronic means, including town hall meetings, Internet chat rooms. In addition to nationwide suggestions, H.R. 3546 would also establish a bipartisan panel of eight members appointed by Congress and the President, and these would be equally divided between the two political parties.

□ 1630

After a year of study, the panel would present a singular set of recommendations to the Congress and the President, and this would have to be done by February of 1999. Inclusion of ideas from average citizens, seasoned experts and lawmakers makes this truly a national dialogue.

It is time for both sides of the aisle, Democrats and Republicans, to unite in an effort to save this most important retirement system: Social Security. The economic well-being of our Nation's seniors has been politicized for far too long. Everyone agrees on the

importance of finding a long-term solution to the question of Social Security's solvency, and H.R. 3546 is a critical step towards developing this solution. To engage in a national discussion of the possible solutions for Social Security is to put the national interest above political interest.

Mr. Speaker, we need to tackle this monumental issue before it is too late. When the Social Security System was first initiated in 1935, there were 16 workers per retiree. Today, that number has dropped sharply to only 3.3 workers per retiree. By the year 2040, fewer than 2 workers will be supporting each retiree. Congress has the obligation to secure the future of Social Security, not just for the present senior but also for our children, our grandchildren and their grandchildren. It is time to put aside political differences and work together for the future of America.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me and the majority of us in both parties in supporting this important legislation, and I congratulate the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARCHER), the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. BUNNING), as well as the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Mrs. KENNELLY) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) for working together to bring this legislation to the floor.

Mrs. KENNELLY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN).

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Connecticut for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, a national dialogue on Social Security is definitely in the best interest of the people of this country. I congratulate President Clinton for his leadership in bringing this issue to the forefront of the American people.

It is also important that we operate in a bipartisan manner. This resolution forwards that bipartisan effort, and I support it. However, I am disappointed there was not more bipartisanship in the creation of this resolution and closer working with the White House.

The dialogue has already begun. In Kansas City on April the 7th, we had a national dialogue started by President Clinton on the future of Social Security and ensuring its long-term solvency. I was pleased that I was able to have a hookup with that national dialogue in the Third Congressional District of Maryland, in Columbia, Maryland. It was a good discussion. Let me share with my colleagues some of the facts that came out as a result of that town hall meeting.

The surplus we are enjoying in our budget, we would not have a surplus but for the fact the Social Security System has a cash surplus. That has produced the surplus in our budget. It would be irresponsible for us to use that surplus for anything other than ensuring the long-term solvency of Social Security.

There are some who are suggesting that we use that to set up individual

savings accounts, taking the money outside the Social Security System. That would do nothing to protect and improve the long-term solvency of the Social Security System.

There are others who are suggesting we should use it for tax cuts. Again, that would not improve the long-term solvency of the Social Security System.

The President is right. We should all make a commitment that the surplus be reserved for Social Security solvency.

Yes, there are dramatic demographic changes in this Nation. We are getting older. But the Social Security System is safe today. The recent trustee report indicates that the solvency is now even 3 years longer than we thought, to the year 2032. So there is no panic within the Social Security System.

We do have a problem in the savings ratios of this Nation. Of the big industrial seven nations, we have the lowest private savings ratios; and we need to do something about that. So the objective, I would hope, of any proposal to deal with Social Security would be, first, to protect the Social Security recipients, those that are retired or near retirement. They cannot change their security issues. They need the Social Security System and the full benefits under that system.

But we also need to increase private savings. After all, there are three legs to retirement security, Social Security, private retirement and savings; and we need to do a better job on private savings and retirement. Along with the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN), I have authored legislation that has been enacted into law that will encourage private savings, and we will be authoring legislation again in this Congress to try to improve private savings and retirement. That is important. We are considering that on a bipartisan basis, and I urge my colleagues to support us in that effort.

We also must ensure the long-term solvency of the Social Security System. If we follow those objectives, we will be serving in the best interest of the people of this Nation, and I hope that the dialogue will begin and protect the Social Security System.

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN).

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Social Security, and I rise to strongly support his legislation and that endorsed by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARCHER).

I also want to say that I strongly agree with the comments of the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CARDIN), who preceded me, regarding the need to increase private savings of both the IRA-type savings, private savings of individuals, and savings through the employer, through pension plans, profit-sharing plans, 401(k)s and so on.

Social Security is a little more controversial than the two legs, and that

is why this commission is so important. But they all work together. Commissions are not always the best way to handle policy dilemmas, Mr. Speaker, and sometimes the Congress uses them too often. There are plenty of commission reports that are collecting dust somewhere in this Capitol.

But I have to tell my colleagues, if the commission structure, goals and membership are clearly thought out, which is the case here, both with the national dialogue and the commission, then on very tough political issues, commissions can work and work well.

I speak from personal experience. Until about a year ago, I was cochairman of the National Commission on Restructuring the IRS. We approached this on not just a bipartisan but a non-partisan basis. We brought in outside expertise, which I think is key. The other cochairman was Senator BOB KERREY, a Democrat from Nebraska. CHARLES GRASSLEY, a Republican, and BILL COYNE, a Democrat, also served on the panel.

Congress created the IRS commission basically to get at the vexing problems of the IRS and try to do it in a non-political context. Another issue like Social Security, IRS can be quite political. We also wanted to bring in outside expertise, which I think is key, and we did so.

In our case, commission members included information technology executives. It included small business advocates, taxpayer advocates, former commissioners, State tax administrators and so on.

We rolled up our sleeves and we spent about 15 months really looking into the problems in a nonpartisan way. We finished on time, under budget and produced a solid report that then became legislation; and, within 4 months of our report, the legislation had passed the House on a strong, bipartisan basis.

I think it is a pretty good model, and I see that same model being replicated here because of the way this commission and dialogue has been structured.

The key is to rise above politics and solve a very tough problem. Again, commissions are not always the best solutions for every big issue that faces this Congress, but I think in this case this commission is properly structured to take a hard look at it with outside expertise in a balanced and bipartisan manner.

And I think on this politically explosive issue, Social Security, it is not only the best way to go, I think, frankly, it is the only way to go. It is the only way we will solve the problem for future generations.

I have my 6-year-old with me today. He asked what we were debating about a little while ago. I said, we are debating about your future and whether when you are retired you will have something there for you. And that is so important, that it is necessary for us to take this step in order to take it out of politics, in order to get with a time frame the kind of consensus we need to

move forward on a bipartisan basis on this program.

So I stand today to again urge support on both sides of the aisle on this process. The tough questions are still in front of us, but we need to get started on it, and this is the important big step.

Mrs. KENNELLY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. NEAL).

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Mrs. KENNELLY) for yielding me this time.

In this Chamber there is a tendency to toss around mind-numbing statistics, and in the best of debates that occur here we attempt oftentimes to convince each other through the use of abstraction. But the truth is that there is one point that must be emphasized today above all else, and that has been the success of Mr. Roosevelt's experiment offered to the American people in 1935.

There are millions of people watching right now, at this very moment across this country, this debate, who enjoy the benefits of Social Security. We should fully acknowledge that Social Security fundamentally changed the way seniors across this Nation have lived out some of the best years of their lives.

So it was not an abstraction, Mr. Speaker, when President Clinton almost exactly 3 months ago walked into this Chamber and in his State of the Union address said, "Let's fix Social Security first."

Now, I know there is a tendency to think that that is some catchy political slogan, but I must disagree. Because saving Social Security first is a generational promise that must be continued into the next century. Fortunately, due to the President's budget in 1993 and the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997, we are showing a surplus for the first time in many years. But we should use that surplus to buy down the debt and to save Social Security first. Social Security remains the lifeline of support for many Americans as they grow older, and our obligation is to strengthen that lifeline.

Now, I know there is talk in this Chamber about offering personal savings accounts. Let us examine that. There can be no harm from a thorough examination. But let us not forget the goal of community that Social Security offers and generational obligation that it compels from all of us.

President Clinton had it right: Let us have a dialogue. And the dialogue, indeed, has already started. Even yesterday, as we reviewed new numbers, we know that there will have to be fundamental examinations of Social Security in the coming years.

But, most importantly, let us point out that retirement savings is a three-legged stool and the three legs are private savings, pension and Social Security, understanding that almost 40 per-

cent of retirement income for most Americans comes from Social Security. We want to encourage people certainly to take more responsibility for their retirement but again not to forget the essential element of Social Security, and that is the interlocking notion of community.

Our society has changed in the workplace dramatically, and I know it is common for individuals to change jobs many times over. That makes it more important now than ever to address the issue of pension portability. Social Security should be addressed this year, and pension portability should be enacted this year.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Mrs. KENNELLY) for taking up this debate once again.

Mr. BUNNING. I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ENGLISH).

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

In my district in western Pennsylvania, most working families and retirees depend on Social Security as the keystone of their retirement security. These families are clearly at risk because of the grim shadow of looming bankruptcy that has fallen on Social Security, casting doubt on its long-term viability.

The collapse of Social Security is not immediate, but it is inevitable without major changes in the program, changes that will become more draconian the longer they are postponed. We in Congress have a fundamental responsibility to move quickly and decisively, free of cant and partisanship, to place Social Security on a sound financial footing.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 3546, legislation to establish a national dialogue on Social Security and a bipartisan panel to design long-term Social Security reform.

Under this legislation, a national dialogue would be convened to engage the American public through regional conferences and through national internet exchanges in understanding the current program, the problems it faces and the need to find solutions that will be workable for all generations.

In addition, a bipartisan panel would be created to design a single package of long-range Social Security reforms to restore the solvency of the system and maintain retirement income security.

The process of Social Security reform created in this bill is the best hope to yield, through engagement of the American public, a solution which restores the long-term viability of the Social Security retirement system in a manner beneficial to every generation and every class.

I urge my colleagues to pass this bill as the first step on the path of fulfilling our obligation as trustees and custodians of a system that has literally transformed the face of poverty among older Americans.

Mrs. KENNELLY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LEWIS).

□ 1645

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend and colleague the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Mrs. KENNELLY) for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, 60 years ago, Franklin Roosevelt, a Democratic President, worked with a Democratic Congress to create a Democratic program to help retired workers, Social Security. For 60 years, the Social Security system that Democrats created has provided retirement security to hundreds of millions of Americans.

Social Security is founded on a simple principle: Every worker contributes to and is part of a common system. We all pay into this system together; and when we retire, we all receive benefits together. For 60 years, Social Security has provided peace of mind to millions of workers and retirees. We must not destroy this peace of mind. We must not destroy the sense of common good created by Social Security.

Providing a privatized Social Security system would destroy this trust. It would take security out of Social Security. Do not believe the fearmongers who tell us that Social Security would not be there for us. They want to end Social Security as we know it. The enemies of Social Security will have us believe that the problems are too big. But the sky is not falling. We can fix Social Security without destroying our covenant with the American people.

Mr. Speaker, I will vote for this bill because I believe we must first save Social Security, but I would not support efforts to privatize Social Security. I will not support efforts to destroy the peace of mind Social Security provides millions of retirees and millions of our workers.

As a Democrat, I will remain true to the Democratic legacy of Social Security, the legacy of people coming together as one to provide a basic livable pension for every American no matter how rich, how poor, how young, or how old. I will fight efforts to divide the rich from the poor and parents from their children.

Mr. Speaker, Democrats will fight to save Social Security first because Social Security is a sacred trust with the American people, and we must never, ever betray this trust with the American people. Protect Social Security first.

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Washington (Mrs. LINDA SMITH).

Mrs. LINDA SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

John Milton wrote, "Time is a subtle thief of youth." Well, we are running out of time on devising a plan to save Social Security, and the failure to salvage a broken system is robbing our youth of hope. Whether one is a recent college graduate or a baby boomer, like

me, all Americans are caught in the system of retirement with few choices, and it is not a healthy future.

Working Americans are paying into Social Security monthly to a total of \$484 billion for this year alone. The cost in paying benefits to retirees right now totals \$382 billion. This leaves \$102 billion to put away for the retirement of the baby boomers and generation X. This money should be managed like a retirement account or personal trust fund. People expect Social Security to be a national retirement savings account. That is the way it should be. Save for the retirement of those paying into the system.

We have to reject the President's plan to spend all but a handful of that, call it the surplus, and say he is going to take 8 to \$10 billion and invest it in saving Social Security.

The Treasury said today that there might be 3 more years in the life of Social Security. Three years? Well, this sounds very, very good for those on Social Security now, and maybe even a few of us older baby boomers. But we have three generations of Americans, my children, my grandchildren, who have put money into that account, and they expect to have something for their future.

Where are the leaders that are going to stand up and say, we have a surplus of \$100 billion a year, money that should go to the future? Where are the leaders that are going to say, this surplus is really enough to stabilize for the next two generations of Social Security accounts? Where are the leaders?

I hope that this Commission will recommend that this Congress stop taking \$100 billion a year out of Social Security and that they will invest all this in the future of retirement.

Mrs. KENNELLY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN).

(Mr. LEVIN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LEVIN. I have been listening to the debate, Mr. Speaker, with interest. And it is clear that we have to move ahead with Social Security.

In a sense, the horse is already out of the barn. This bill calls for a national dialogue, and that is already started. The President and the Vice President started it on a bipartisan basis. There has been a very effective meeting already, and others are being held under the auspices of a foundation. So that dialogue is under way. No one should think that it has not started.

But I will vote for this bill because it will keep the conversation going. For those of us who have been working so hard these years to secure Social Security, I do not think we need to have another vote that says we care. That is so clear. Maybe some want that vote and will join them. But for those of us who have been fighting all these years to make sure Social Security is secure, we say, whatever needs to be fixed, fix it.

Do not break the system. Look to the future, but do not forget what is true today and what has been true in the past.

And what is true today is that the Social Security system is essentially the economic foundation for a majority of the people who are retired, as has been discussed. But I think this has to be very much remembered. In this country, close to 70 percent of seniors have incomes of less than \$25,000 a year, and 46 percent have incomes of less than \$15,000. In Michigan, that figure is even higher. One estimate is that 85 percent have incomes of \$25,000 or less, and 70 percent have incomes of \$15,000 or less. So they are asking us, look to the future, but do not ruin the present.

Those of us who work for fiscal responsibility should be proud of that. We have a surplus. If it had not been for our vote, there would not be this. This surplus would not exist, though, without the inflow from Social Security. And the lesson from those two points is this: Now we have time to fix Social Security for the long term because of the surplus, but let us use those funds because the surplus is in large measure because of Social Security, so use it for that purpose. And any other programs, whether they are tax cuts or other programs, should not be financed out of this surplus. Save and ensure Social Security first.

So let us move ahead. I am in favor of flexibility, of looking at new alternatives, at looking at new ways to finance the retirement of people. As we do it, let us remember our sacred obligation. We have an obligation for the future. We also have an obligation to those who are paying in that we not undermine Social Security as they near retirement.

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LUCAS).

Mr. LUCAS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 3546, the National Dialogue on Social Security Act.

In 1949, when my father entered the work force, people could look at their paychecks, see their Social Security taxes withheld, and feel sure that the money would be waiting for them when they turned 65.

When my daughter Jessica signs up for her first job in a year at age 16, and I can assure my colleagues her mother and I will help her find a part-time job, the amount that she sees deducted from her paycheck from Social Security will not only be higher than 1949, but it will not necessarily be waiting for her in about 50 years. In fact, for those of us under the age of 50, we may not be receiving anything until the age 67 or older.

Now some say that we have, basically, three options: Raise taxes, cut benefits, or reform the system. One of the causes of our present problems is that high taxes do not allow individuals to save and supplement their pen-

sions and Social Security savings as was originally meant to be done.

There has been talk of adjusting the CPI, the Consumer Price Index, so as not to overstate inflation. This would make Social Security COLAs smaller. However, it is unfair to reduce benefits to current retirees.

Personally, I am partial to the idea of supplementing, let me repeat that, supplementing our Social Security benefits by allowing individuals to invest for themselves. We should create individual savings accounts that allow individuals to increase retirement incomes by investing a portion of their payroll taxes in the market. These would be a mandatory savings account that could not be drawn on until retirement.

A good first step in finding a solution like a personal Social Security account would be to pass this legislation, establish a bipartisan panel to study long-term Social Security reform, and report their findings to Congress no later than February 1, 1999.

We should put aside our bipartisan politics and do what is right for the American people. We must make sure that Social Security is there.

Mrs. KENNELLY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ).

(Mr. RODRIGUEZ asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the efforts to ensure Social Security remains viable for the next generation, for our children, and for our grandchildren.

I have met with various constituents, and they agree that we need to make some tough decisions that are before us to assure the viability of Social Security for future generations. I support the creation of a bipartisan commission, but I would caution those efforts in terms of privatization, and I would caution my colleagues and remind them in terms of the S&L scandals that occurred during the 1980s, where their pension funds could be depleted.

I would urge the House leadership to also work closely with President Clinton on ongoing initiatives on Social Security. And I commend the President for his leadership on moving forward in ensuring the security of Social Security. With all the past borrowing from the Social Security Trust Fund, we need to ensure that our baby boomers and subsequent generations are assured access to Social Security.

I would ask that, as the Commission moves, that we look first, number one, to the existing senior citizens that are there now to make sure that they receive what they deserve; secondly, that as we move beyond the year 2012, and the baby boomers start reaching that area, that we assure that generation that they will have also access to Social Security. And thirdly, for the youngsters that are now beginning to pay, those that are 20, 30 years old, we need to assure with that piece of legislation that would become in terms of

the recommendations that they also will have access as they move forward in the next generation.

Future generations rightfully worry that they will not be able to have fair returns on their Social Security, so it is up to us to make sure that we take those populations into consideration. We can help assure that Social Security be ensured for the next few generations.

We also need to remember and recognize the fact that Social Security is there for the disabled and the blind, and we need to remember that and be cautious with that, because that has also helped half of our senior citizens out of poverty because of Social Security.

So I want to urge my colleagues to vote for the motion to recommit this bill so we can add firm language that would reserve any surplus to also help fix Social Security.

□ 1700

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SANFORD).

Mr. SANFORD. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill because it makes sense, and it is an idea that simply grows and expands and fertilizes a debate on saving Social Security that is already taking place in this House.

I would suggest that that is a bipartisan debate that is beginning to take place. If we look at, for instance, what JOHN KERRY, Democrat on the Senate side, has said about maybe we ought to look at ways of updating Social Security and taking that 10 percent and making sure that that 10 percent tax goes into something that actually builds wealth, versus what the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. BUNNING) pointed out earlier which is the case for a young 40-year-old, you have to live until you are 89 to get all your Social Security benefits back, or if you are a 30-year-old you have to live until you are 91 to get all those benefits back, that is the beginning of a bipartisan debate.

Another thing that says to me this is a bipartisan debate is that PAT MOYNIHAN, a great guardian of Social Security over the years, has said why do we not look at the possibility of letting individuals redirect 2 percent of their payroll tax and put it into their own personal savings account that again begins to build wealth.

On the Republican side we look at what the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KASICH) has said, "Why don't we look at the surplus and make sure that Washington can't spend the money by rebating that surplus back to FICA taxpayers so that they could begin their own personal savings account."

Or we have a bill that says why do we not give people below the age of 65 simply the option of redirecting a large portion of their payroll tax into their own personal savings account. Or what NICK SMITH or RICK SANTORUM or JUDD GREGG or ROD GRAMS, a whole long list of Republicans have out there.

What this bill does is put those ideas in a bag and allows people to shake those ideas around for a year and then see which ideas make sense as we go forward in this debate. I would say most of all this debate is simply a debate about the American dream, because the American dream is tied to ending a lifetime of work with something other than just memories to show for it. Yet in our system, based on what the trustees have said, is that if we do nothing to address this problem, people will be paying 10 percent of what they earn every day and every week and every month into a system that does not build wealth for them.

Mrs. KENNELLY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mrs. THURMAN).

Mrs. THURMAN. Mr. Speaker, I first want to thank the gentleman from Connecticut (Mrs. KENNELLY) for her leadership and her work as the ranking member on the Subcommittee on Social Security. She has done a great job with this and has worked very hard. We should all thank her for the time that she has spent on this.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to support this bill, not because I think that we need more commissions, because we do not, and not because there is an immediate Social Security crisis, because there is not. But I do support the concept of a dialogue on Social Security.

However, we need to remember that the current debate stands in stark contrast to the debate which led to the 1983 Social Security amendments when the trust funds could finance benefits for only a short time. If we are going to begin a national dialogue, it needs to start on a solid base of information about Social Security and its financial condition.

I have been troubled that there are various groups and some Members that have been scaring some seniors and spreading inaccurate horror stories on the solvency of the Social Security Trust Fund. I would like to state for the record there is no immediate crisis. In fact, I would like to quote a headline in today's St. Pete Times, Outlook for Social Security Brightens. Let us face it, it is because we have a strong economy and people are working and inflation is at the lowest level in decades.

We do, however, need to address the Social Security Trust Fund shortfall which is expected to occur in 2032, three years later than previously expected, and even at that the trust fund will still cover nearly 75 percent of the benefits. In the Committee on Ways and Means hearing on the measure, Senator Bob Dole agreed that we now have time to do this in a deliberative way and get it done in a bipartisan manner. I could not agree more.

I am going to support this bill because I believe it is important to try to reach out to all interested parties and bring them into the discussion. Many often forgot that Social Security also provides disability protection. The bill

as previously written failed to take into account the views of the more than 4 million disabled workers and their 1.7 million dependents receiving Social Security.

That is why during the committee markup of this measure I introduced an amendment to add to the dialogue council the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities, bringing the total number of groups to 25. I would like at this time to thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARCHER) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) for their support of this amendment.

I would like to stress, however, that the legislation duplicates many of the efforts that are already under way. We all know that groups have already been meeting throughout the country to address the future of Social Security. I look forward to the continued dialogue.

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE).

Mr. THUNE. I thank the distinguished gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I too want to speak in support of this because, as was noted earlier, this is not a Republican issue, this is not a Democrat issue, this is an American issue. This is a problem that we have to deal with.

It is one in my State of South Dakota that is particularly important because we have probably as high of an over-65 population as any State in the country. It also includes my mother and father who depend very heavily upon this important program, and it is one in which I think we agree we have to look at how we can save this program and also improve it for the next generation.

Frankly, I credit the committee with launching this debate because in fact it does say something about Washington actually dealing with a long-term issue. Rather than waiting until the horse is out of the barn, which is the way that this city oftentimes addresses issues, we are looking down the road at what we can do at this particular point in time to address what is going to be a long-term challenge in this country. In doing that, I think there are a couple of parameters I hope we have as we begin this debate.

The first is that no retiree today or someone who is going to retire should have to worry about their Social Security benefits being touched. We need to come up with a system that protects for now and forever those who have paid in, those who are relying on that very important program. I think that is a principle upon which this debate should be based. But, secondly, we also have to look at how we can improve this system for young people today who are paying in so that we can dramatically increase their retirement income, and when the time comes they will be able to supplement what Social Security provides.

And so in having this debate, as we lay out those parameters, I think it is

important that everybody be at the table. This bill contemplates involving in a bipartisan way all the organizations who have a stake in this issue and all the various generational groups, starting with generation X and baby boomers and current retirees. But it is a debate that we need to have.

I want to credit again the committee for taking action to begin the debate now before the crisis hits later. It is something that I very much support. I look forward to entering into this debate.

Mrs. KENNELLY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KLECZKA).

Mr. KLECZKA. I thank the gentleman from Connecticut for yielding time.

Mr. Speaker, I stand in support of the legislation before us, H.R. 3546. It is a commission. It is made up of a council. Hopefully we are going to get the brightest and the best minds to come up with some resolve to a problem which is not pending today, it is off 30-something years from now, but I think it is wise that Congress develop a fix to the problem now when we have the luxury of time, when we have the luxury of an elongated debate.

I am not from the school that thinks this is just another commission. I say to you if in fact we have another idea for another commission in the summer composed of 24 different members of a council, let us also pass that, because the problem before us is probably the weightiest that this Congress is going to address in a very, very long time.

We have been told repeatedly during the debate that we have to take the politics out of this issue. It seems to me that that admonition is being directed to the Democrats. Let me just indicate to my colleagues that there is legislation pending in the House which would give those seniors born between the year 1917 and 1926 a \$5,000 lump payment. That would cost the Social Security Trust Fund, which is already in fiscal peril, some \$40 billion to \$50 billion. That also is playing politics.

To make the situation even worse, seniors in my district and around the country are getting a mailing today by a group called a special project of TREA, Senior Citizen League, asking the seniors to send in this registration form to get on the Wisconsin Register of Notch Victims. It also asks them to send in \$15, \$20 as a special gift. That is cruel. That is cruel, because we know in this body that bill will never pass. We do not have the \$50 billion.

So I say let us take politics out of the debate, but that goes to both sides of the aisle, not only in this reform legislation that we are talking about but also other bills that are introduced. I am disturbed that there is talk in this body about a person who is 45 today would have to live to 85 to collect all their money. My friends, this is a pension plan and not a deferred savings plan.

Our family had the unfortunate event of losing not only my sister but my

brother-in-law some 13 months ago. They had worked all their lives and paid into Social Security. Never once did their four children come to me, my nieces and nephews, saying, "That's unfair. Give us the money back." Why? Because my father had the good fortune of living to 82. He clearly collected more than he put in. A few weeks ago we went to Chicago to celebrate Auntie Marie Ducha's 90th birthday. She is getting more than her and Uncle John paid in. That is the system.

If we devise a reform plan and bring it to this floor that gives everyone their money back in total, we are going to put at peril the 40 to 50 million people currently receiving benefits because we are going to cut off that revenue stream.

We all have preconditions as we enter this debate. Mine is very simple: Do not tamper with the revenue stream now that pays those benefits for those who are currently on the system. If you want to take politics out of this debate, vote for the motion later today that would reserve this surplus, because this reform bill will have some enormous costs connected with it.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support H.R. 3546, the National Dialogue on Social Security Act. Social Security reform is one of the most talked-about issues around Capitol Hill tables and kitchen tables across the Nation. As with any issue of this magnitude, everyone has a different solution and method of reforming the Social Security system.

Some people want the program to remain exactly as it is, while others call for total or partial privatizing, or an increase in the retirement age, or tax incentives like Individual Retirement Accounts.

One condition for reform, however, is that we guarantee a sufficient revenue stream to make good on our promise of benefits to those who are retired or planning their retirement around the current system.

In order to achieve this, we need to have a constructive and comprehensive national discussion about the future of Social Security, which annually pays benefits to nearly 50 million retired and disabled workers and their dependents and survivors.

The bill on the floor today will foster such a dialogue. It creates an 8-member commission to develop reform recommendations and solicit feedback from the American people, partly through the Internet.

The President and both Democratic and Republican Members of Congress will then use these recommendations to design a single package of long-range reforms to strengthen the Social Security trust fund. The deadline for presenting suggestions to Congress is February 1, 1999. This gives us sufficient time to draft a comprehensive and fair plan.

The proposed commission complements bipartisan forums being held around the nation, such as the one held by the President, the American Association of Retired Persons, and the Concord Coalition in early April. That meeting also sought to solicit ideas from the American public and inform them of many reform options.

Other private sector groups, such as Americans Discuss Social Security, are also hosting town hall meetings across the country and on

the Internet. Again, these meetings are facilitating a nationwide debate about the future of Social Security and providing a framework for restructuring the Social Security system.

I am pleased these forums are including the opinions and ideas of people across the country. A healthy dialogue will now ensure that Congress passes a meaningful and equitable product to ensure the solvency of this program. I look forward to hearing from my constituents as they take part in this national debate about the best ways to preserve Social Security for our children, grandchildren, and beyond.

I urge support of the bill before us so we will be armed with all suggestions and solutions as Congress goes about the task of major reform of this most important national program.

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGRICH).

Mr. GINGRICH. Mr. Speaker, let me thank the gentleman from Kentucky for yielding me the time and also recognize the extraordinary leadership he has shown as the chairman of the subcommittee which has worked so hard to save Social Security and to make sure that Social Security will be there for our parents and that it will be there for the baby boomers and their children. I think nobody in this House has done more to really try to develop the database, to hold the hearings, to do the investigations, to lay the framework for saving Social Security than the gentleman from Kentucky.

I simply wanted to rise in strong support of this opportunity to engage the American people and to make the point that this is different than past efforts. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first commission developed with an inherent Internet base to it that will allow every American to have an opportunity to find out what all the different proposals will do for them, which proposals for the future are best for all Americans.

I think it is very important for people in Washington to realize that in the information age we need to share information and share opportunities to participate with all of our citizens. When we talk about something as important and as personal as Social Security, we have a particular need to truly be in a position to have everybody feel comfortable that they know what is being proposed, they know how to deal with it, they know how it will affect their lives and they have had a chance to have input and to offer advice.

In addition, this commission is designed so that the age breakout, with one-third baby boomers, one-third older than baby boomers and one-third younger, is designed to create a generational dialogue rather than generational warfare. It is designed to bring Americans together rather than to separate Americans, to have Americans, grandparents and grandchildren, children and parents, all talking together about how we save Social Security and how we create a better future.

Finally, this commission, I think, offers us a tremendous opportunity for

every Member to participate. I have talked with the American Association of Retired Persons, for example. They are very eager on a nonpartisan basis to work with every single Member, to have meetings where everything is laid out, no preconditions, but look at all the different options that have been created, all the different possibilities, have a dialogue with the entire community.

I hope that we will be able next year, in 1999, to take major steps towards creating a 21st century information age Social Security system that is sounder, stronger and better than the current system. I want to make sure that my mother and my mother-in-law who are currently on Social Security get every penny of their cost-of-living increase, that they get the money they should get from the system that they have depended on, I want to make sure that the baby boomers have a fair chance to have an even better future with a system that will not collapse when they retire, and I want to make sure that my two daughters, who are younger than the baby boomers, have an opportunity to have an even better system and do not have to fear that they are simply throwing their money away.

□ 1715

This commission is a key step towards rebuilding faith with America's young people when we learn that, pollsters tell us, that people under 30, more of them believe in unidentified flying objects than believe that they will get Social Security.

We know that we have a problem in cynicism and a problem in people simply not believing that they have been considered. I think we have a chance by creating this commission to create a dialogue where everybody has a better future, everybody has a better opportunity to know that their savings are going to go to a system that they will have a chance to survive with, and I think that is very, very important. This is a step towards saving Social Security for the baby boomers and their children and saving it by making it more modern and even better.

And I thank my friend again for the leadership he has shown in really being a pioneer at recognizing that saving our parents for our generation and saving our children, while making sure we also survive, is a tricky, complicated business, but if we talk together as Americans, we can do it.

Mrs. KENNELLY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY).

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding this time to me, and I commend the chairman, the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. BUNNING) and the ranking member, the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Mrs. KENNELLY) for their wonderful work on Social Security.

I could come to the floor this afternoon with charts and graphs and statis-

tics to underscore the critical nature of Social Security to the people of this country. But instead, in the next minute or so, let me just tell my colleagues what this program has meant for me.

My father died years before he ever received one retirement benefit under Social Security. But because my brother and I were minors at the time, we received vitally needed survivors' benefits under Social Security. Frankly, that allowed us to continue to get our college education and get on with life.

I have a very good friend who is incapacitated with mental illness and cannot work. He receives and lives entirely on his Social Security benefit.

My mother, now age 77, lives independently, would simply not be able to but for her Social Security check; and whether she lives to be 87, 97, 107, with that guarantee of the Social Security check, as long as her health holds out, she can continue to live independently.

Now I am absolutely determined to make certain that these core assurances, survivors benefits, disability benefits, a retirement benefit that is there as long as one may live, continue to be part of any Social Security program on into the future, and I have some plans in terms of how we get that accomplished.

I am forced to vote against this commission idea today, however, because it omits one critical facet, and that is the one thing this House can do today that really has bearing on taking a positive step forward in Social Security, committing that we do not touch the surplus until we have this Social Security reform idea all figured out.

Mr. Speaker, the President said it first, and he said it best. We must save Social Security first.

The Speaker, testifying to the Committee on Ways and Means, says he wants to take that surplus and put it in individual accounts this year. That would be exactly the wrong thing to do. We have to have the constructive national bipartisan debate the majority and minority have been talking about today. We must lock up this surplus until we have figured out Social Security reform.

And I will be offering a motion to recommit later that will make one change to the proposal before us but a vitally needed one. It will direct that the surplus is held absolutely until Social Security reform is completed.

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. KOLBE).

Mr. KOLBE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding this time to me.

I want to echo the words that the Speaker said a few minutes ago in congratulating the gentleman from Kentucky, others on his subcommittee and the full committee for the work that has been done in this area. There can be no more important thing for us to talk about today, tomorrow, this year or next year than preserving Social Security and making sure it works for

those who get it now and those who will need it in the future.

This is not the first time we have had to deal with the troubled Social Security program, and no one is going to argue that it has been one of the, if not the most, successful social programs that we have today. It is one of the reasons that poverty among the elderly has declined as dramatically as it has.

But, like many nations around the world, all nations, we are embarking on a major, unprecedented demographic transformation which threatens the promise of Social Security in the future.

Most experts agree that a long-range deficit in the Social Security program needs to be addressed in the near future so that we can change it for the future. We really cannot delay reform.

Now the legislation that is before us today would create a national dialogue on Social Security, and I believe that is the key to having a successful reform and change of it. It is imperative that Americans must be engaged in this discussion, understand the parameters of what we are talking about and to develop a national consensus for change. We need to hear what people are saying, to really listen to them.

I like to think that the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) and I began this process 3 years ago when we created the House Public Pension Reform Caucus, which includes now more than 70 Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle. It began the process here in the House of educating the Members of Congress, providing a forum to discuss, to research, examine the problems that plague Social Security.

Additionally, I have recently convened a group of my own in Tucson, 30 people, called my own task force on retirement savings to encourage a dialogue with constituents. They represent their own constituents' groups. The idea is for them to go back, have a dialogue with their individuals, their members, and bring it to my own task force. Again, this is part of reaching out that I think is necessary, that we must do on a national basis.

Now this legislation also creates a bipartisan panel to design a long-range Social Security preservation plan, and I strongly agree with my colleagues that Social Security reform must be bipartisan if it is going to receive the confidence of the American people or the needed support in Congress. But I would like to mention there have been a lot of commissions and panels that have diagnosed the problems that are facing Social Security and offered countless options for ways in which we could improve it or fix it.

One commission which I am pleased that I have had the opportunity to participate in is the CSIS National Commission on Retirement Policy. Along with my colleague, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) and with Senators GREGG and BREAU, this commission has helped to bridge the gap between House and Senate, private and

public sectors. Next month, this commission, after more than a year of work, will unveil its bipartisan, bicameral public service sector reform proposal.

Mr. Speaker, we have grappled with the difficult decisions necessary to advance a bipartisan Social Security reform, such as the long-term solvency of the system, national savings, equity of benefits across income, across generations and income levels, designing the individual retirement accounts to supplement Social Security, the administrative feasibility of accounts, the management and regulation of accounts and the distribution of those funds upon retirement.

I absolutely agree that this bipartisan panel that is created by this legislation needs to look at all of these different proposals that are out there, and I believe if we do that not starting from ground zero we can accomplish this next year, which I believe is the critical year for us to do so.

Mr. Speaker, I support this legislation.

Mrs. KENNELLY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON).

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, thanks to the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Mrs. KENNELLY) for yielding this time to me.

Mr. Speaker, this bill for dialogue is something I really support and agree with. As a matter of fact, I have already had a public dialogue. But this bill is worded so that the surplus could be spent to create private retirement accounts, and that is favored by the gentleman from Georgia (Speaker GINGRICH) and the Chairman of the Committee on the Budget, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KASICH). What they do not tell us is that they intend for these private accounts to replace Social Security benefits.

In the State of the Union speech this year, President Clinton lost a national debate with the American people about what they want Social Security to look like in the 21st century. The President pledged to enter into negotiations with Congress by early next year on Social Security reform legislation.

Now I do not believe that we should preempt the American people by spending the budget surplus on private retirement accounts before we decide how and if private accounts fit into a comprehensive Social Security reform package. There are inherent dangers in relying on the stock market as something as important as Social Security that really must be discussed and people must be clear on that.

Everyone's retirement income would depend on the ups and downs of the market. Benefits for widows and children of deceased workers would be jeopardized, people would have to buy private disability insurance if they could find one to sell it to them for a policy that would be comparable to Social Security disability benefit at a price that they could afford.

The fiscally responsible thing for Congress to do is to guarantee that all of any present and future budget surpluses be used for Social Security reform in whatever form it might take after we complete the year of dialogue. Saving this money will reduce the Federal debt as well as shore up the Social Security Trust Fund. Such action is a much more effective means of assuring future retirement security for future generations than spending the budget surplus to establish these private funds. I do not believe we ought to leave the people at the whims of the stock market.

Mr. BUNNING of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. HAYWORTH).

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Kentucky, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Social Security on which I am privileged to serve.

Mr. Speaker, my dear friend from Texas offers a picture-perfect example of why we need to have a national dialogue on Social Security, because perhaps she misunderstands the intent of what many people have talked about here. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I would welcome the gentlewoman joining with the chairman of the Subcommittee on Social Security in sponsoring H.R. 3351 if, in fact, she is afraid that somehow Social Security will be taken from today's seniors.

Let me humbly suggest, Mr. Speaker, that nothing could be further from the truth, and those who offer that argument, no matter how well modulated and how reasonably stated, are sadly succumbing to the temptation of rhetorical terrorism. Let us state clearly and unequivocally from both sections, from both aisles, that the challenge for us remains, first and foremost, to keep Social Security intact for today's seniors. But, at the same time, we should welcome a national dialogue on something this vitally important.

I listened with great interest, Mr. Speaker, to my colleague from Arizona. Because I, too, have formed a citizen's committee on retirement. I, too, invited not only current retirees but baby boomers and members of the next generation to join in a dialogue. That is the key to dealing with this problem. That is what this modest proposal suggests.

Indeed, a look back at recent history would suggest that Washington gets into trouble when Washington experts listen to each other, when they are walled off from the rest of the people, when they fail to take into account the concerns of average American citizens, most notably today's Social Security recipients.

So this legislation, which I am pleased to support, says that we will set up a dialogue not as Democrats or as Republicans but as Americans, not to succumb to the temptations of rhetorical terrorism but, instead, to offer sound, sensible solutions. Because the stakes are too high, the stakes are too

high to succumb to the temptation of sloganeering for campaigns just a few months away.

□ 1730

Please support the legislation.

Mrs. KENNELLY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS).

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Connecticut for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, if I might, let me broaden this discussion a little bit and put it into a somewhat different context.

Mr. Speaker, the United States has by far the most unfair distribution of wealth and income in the industrialized world and the greatest gap between the rich and the poor. In recent years in this country, we have seen a proliferation of millionaires and billionaires, while at the same time about half of the senior citizens in this country are trying to survive on incomes of \$15,000 a year or less, and 12 percent of the seniors live in poverty.

Many senior citizens today cannot afford their prescription drugs. In my State seniors make a choice between heating their homes in the winter and buying the food they need and the prescriptions drugs they need. That is a crisis which we should be dealing with.

What is not a crisis is the fact that Social Security today will pay out every benefit owed to every eligible American for the next 33 years. Now, what other program do we have that is going to pay out all of their benefits for the next 33 years? How many businesses in America today can say, gee, if I do not do anything, things are going to continue to go okay for 33 years?

Should we begin to address the fact that as our population ages and we have fewer workers, that we are going to have a problem? Of course. Should we discuss it today? Yes, we should. But let us not fool the American people and talk about a crisis and the bankruptcy of the Social Security system which today is going to have an \$80 billion surplus this year.

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. HERGER).

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3546, the National Dialogue on Social Security Act. According to the trustees of the Social Security Trust Fund, the system is going broke. By the year 2013, the Trust Fund will be paying out more in benefits than it takes in through payroll taxes. By the year 2032, the Social Security Trust Fund will be completely bankrupt.

Saving Social Security must be our Nation's most important priority, and we must all work together to move this process forward. Social Security is much too vital a program to have just one party or one branch of a government push for reform. Saving Social Security should not be a Republican versus Democrat issue; it should not be a conservative versus liberal issue, and

it should not be a Congress versus the President issue. It should be an issue where we all stand together, placing the interests of our Nation first.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation before us today puts us on that road to reform. The proposal has two parts. First, it seeks to engage the public on the future of Social Security. Earlier this month I held town hall meetings in each of the 10 counties that make up my congressional district in northern California. At these forums, literally hundreds of citizens of all ages shared with me their ideas and suggestions about how to improve the health of the Social Security system. This legislation will make sure that the voices of the American people continue to be heard throughout the reform process.

Second, this proposal establishes a bipartisan intergenerational panel to design a single package of long-range reforms. I believe that this panel represents our Nation's best hope for securing the broad bipartisan, intergenerational support we must have to tackle this monumental task.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this very important legislation.

Mrs. KENNELLY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DAVIS).

Mr. DAVIS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I support this bill. I think it is important we have an open and honest debate about how we assure the solvency of the Social Security Trust Fund. I think it is terribly important we work off the same set of facts as we debate that.

But our first order of business has to be to use the proposed surplus to repay the massive Federal debt, starting with that portion of the debt that is owed to the Social Security Trust Fund. Well, how do we do that? We do that by exercising discipline in our spending habits. We resist the temptation to use the surplus to pay for new Federal programs or tax cuts at the expense of the Social Security Trust Fund. If we are going to increase spending and programs or reduce taxes, find the money in the existing Federal budget, but do not use the surplus.

And how do we go about doing that? Well, the first step is we need to take up and pass a House budget resolution. We are running almost 2 months behind in doing that for no valid reason whatsoever. The budget resolution is our road map, it is our spending plan in which we limit ourselves as to where we are going to spend money, how we are going to pay for tax cuts, how we are going to pay for existing programs and new programs, and most importantly of all, how we are going to protect that surplus and use that money to begin paying back the Social Security Trust Fund.

Without passing that budget resolution, we are in serious danger of passing spending bills in the House of Representatives without appreciating how

we are going to pay for them, and with potentially spending the surplus; and, perhaps worst of all, Mr. Speaker, we are in serious danger without passing this House budget resolution of passing spending bills on the floor of the House, spending the surplus without admitting to it ourselves or to the American public.

So what we do is far more important than what we say. We need to have a national dialogue, but we need to take up and pass the House budget resolution, and we need to protect the surplus in the budget resolution.

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 30 seconds.

I would suggest to the gentleman from Florida that he look at H.R. 3351. It is a bill that will do just exactly what the gentleman says. It is a bill that will wall off the surplus, and until we have a settlement on Social Security, no one can touch it. It will buy the debt down until that time, and I suggest that the gentleman look at H.R. 3351, which I am the principal sponsor of.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH).

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Very quickly, in terms of whether it is bankrupt or not, if we just kept increasing taxes on the American workers, there would always be tax revenues coming in. But just to caution everybody on the danger of tax increases, that is how we solved the problem in the 1970s, that is how we solved the problem in 1983. In fact, we have increased the Social Security tax 36 times since 1971. More often than once a year we have put additional tax on American workers. I would just suggest that it is very dangerous if we continue to rely on tax increases to solve this problem.

Today, the American working families pay more, 75 percent of American working families pay more in the FICA tax, Social Security tax, than they do in the income tax. So I would hope, even though I suggest we keep everything on the table, let us at least consider the imposition of increased taxes.

I would plead with my colleagues not to use as an excuse the fact that if the government pays back everything that it has borrowed from the Social Security Trust Fund, that we will continue to have enough money until the year 2032.

Just look at this chart a minute. The little blue blip up here on the left is the additional money that is coming in from current taxes that is over and above paying out the existing benefits. That runs out, in the new estimate, in 2013. But look at this year, for example. And the rest of the chart in red is how much money the general fund is going to have to come up with to pay back what has been borrowed.

In the year 2032, for example, somehow the general fund is going to have to come up with \$200 billion, and we ei-

ther do that by cutting other spending, by increasing taxes or by more public borrowing, but again, it is not all that easy to pay back what has already been used up and is now in the Trust Fund.

Some people suggest that using the surplus is a way to start solving the problem. I agree, let us do it. I just got the actuary's report today, though. Based on using all of the projected surplus up until the year 2016, it would only solve less than 20 percent of the Social Security problem.

Some people have suggested if government would just simply stop borrowing from the Social Security Trust Fund, it would be okay. I agree again. Let us stop that. Let us at least make that borrowing marketable certificates so the trustees at any time can go around the corner to the local bank when they need additional benefits and cash that in to pay those benefits. But as we see from this chart, we are now spending the surplus, which is approximately \$72 billion this year, \$84 billion next year, \$100 billion the year after that, and then we start going downhill with less and less of a surplus going to the Trust Fund. Let us not put off this very serious problem. Let us deal with it. The longer we put it off, the more drastic the solution.

Mrs. KENNELLY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. HOOLEY).

Ms. HOOLEY of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Connecticut for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, saving Social Security is absolutely critical. Social Security is one of the cornerstones that has made our country great. It was 50 years ago, or more than 50 years ago, when it took great courage on the part of FDR to stand up and say that too many older Americans were living in poverty and that we needed to do something about it, just as it takes great courage on the part of this President to stand up and say, we cannot let the Social Security program become unglued at this time.

It is time to ensure that Social Security will exist for generations to come. Today I want to thank the Members on the other side of the aisle who have followed the President's lead and said that our budget surplus must be reserved for saving Social Security first. I look forward to working with leaders from both parties to develop solutions that will ensure the continued success of Social Security without putting the retirement benefits of current and future citizens at risk.

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER).

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in strong support of the bipartisan Commission on Social Security. I represent the congressional district in Florida that has more seniors than any other district in the Nation, so the solvency of Social Security, like Medicare, is very important to me and my constituents.

But I am concerned about Social Security, not only for today's seniors, but also for their children and grandchildren. We have all heard that the Social Security Trust Fund will go broke by the year 2032. I know that may seem like a long way off, but when baby boomers begin retiring and become eligible for Social Security, it will be very difficult to make changes. We need time to transition to a new system and give Americans time to prepare for their retirement.

That is why we must have the courage to reform Social Security now, before we enter a crisis mode. Good public policy is not achieved in crisis.

The Commission would take this debate out of partisan politics while the American people learn the facts and constructively discuss the options for reform.

What are the facts? The first fact: America is getting older and living longer. In the 21st century we will witness big demographic changes. As the baby boomers cross into retirement and life expectancy increases, the number of Americans on Social Security will also rapidly increase. Meanwhile, the number of workers paying taxes to support the elderly will decrease. Simply put, we will have more seniors living longer and fewer workers to support them. As good as it has been, Social Security is unsustainable in its current form.

The second fact: Americans need more information. Americans, young and old, know there is a problem, but they are not sure why it exists or how to solve it. The Commission's national dialogue would help dispel the myths about Social Security and allow for complete discussion of reform options among seniors, baby boomers and young people, because any reform proposal must have trigenerational support. Social Security reform must be a win/win/win.

Why is the Commission critical? At first, I was skeptical that a commission was the right answer. I feared it would take too long and offer too many solutions. But this Commission would only offer one recommendation by February 1999.

□ 1745

In other words, the commission would take swift and decisive action. This commission would provide a solid basis for enacting broad, bipartisan changes to Social Security, changes that will ensure a secure retirement for all generations.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge my colleagues to support the bipartisan commission. It is the right time and a prudent measure.

Mrs. KENNELLY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH).

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, there are people who say they want a dialogue on Social Security. I suggest such a dialogue would be like a cat having a dialogue with a mouse, or

maybe a crocodile having a dialogue with a frog, or perhaps a shark having a dialogue with a tuna.

Because Wall Street having a dialogue over Social Security with senior citizens is just as predatory, because they do not really want a dialogue. They already know what they want to do with Social Security, I would say to Mr. and Mrs. America. They want to take benefits from them and use those benefits to fuel growth in the stock market.

Mr. Speaker, it is really about privatization. That is what they mean when they say, "Let us have a dialogue." A dialogue with Wall Street is about how to grab Americans' retirement funds through privatization.

Mr. Speaker, there is no crisis. The current tax and benefit rates remaining constant, Social Security will pay 100 percent of the benefits of future recipients until 2032 without any change whatsoever. In today's Cleveland Plain Dealer, my hometown, it says, "Social Security's health is improving."

A problem that could develop in 35 years is not a crisis, it is a projection. The privatization dialogue would dismantle a hugely popular and successful government program and deliver a hugely profitable kitty for Wall Street investors to charge fees on.

Privatizing Social Security is a radical, extreme measure. It would guarantee that there would be retirees who would go poor because their private investments failed. For every winner in the stock market, there will be a loser. Wall Street goes up, 9,000 points, and Wall Street will come down. And then where will retirees be when they need their monthly check?

Privatizing Social Security will endanger one of its greatest accomplishments, that it has saved millions of seniors from the despair of poverty because it guarantees benefits. Mr. Speaker, I urge Members to reject this bill.

Mrs. KENNELLY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW).

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support a 60-year success story called Social Security. Almost half of our senior citizens were in poverty before its enactment, and now literally millions of seniors have been able to live and have a good quality of life because of that safety net called Social Security.

I also rise to ask my colleagues, in addition to voting for this resolution, to vote for what I believe is the most significant vote that will be in front of us today, and that is the motion to recommit offered by the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY), my good friend, who will be offering to us the opportunity to truly put Social Security first by indicating that every single penny of any surplus that we have now would be put aside and held until we solve the Social Security situation.

Mr. Speaker, we have time to do it right. We in fact know that as of yes-

terday, we now hear that it will be 2032 before Social Security runs out. That gives us time to do small steps in order to solve the problems in a big way, and I would urge us to do it quickly, to preserve and protect Social Security.

Mr. Speaker, I would also urge my colleagues then to do the additional things that we need to do to make sure that our citizens have retirement security, expanding savings opportunities. First we have Social Security. We need to protect it and preserve it. Secondly, we need to expand those kinds of things that we did in the Taxpayer Relief bill last year where we expanded IRA options and make sure we have other options to encourage savings.

Third, I would urge my colleagues to focus on pensions for small businesses. I have a bill, as do others of my colleagues have important legislation, that would give future opportunities for the 42 million people who work for small businesses, work hard every day, or who own their own small business and need a pension. All three of those things together will help us to guarantee every American retirement security for the future.

Mrs. KENNELLY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BENTSEN).

(Mr. BENTSEN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, I have no particular problem with the creation of another commission to study the needs of the Social Security program, so long as it is balanced and without agendas other than the true need to preserve the safety net for America's workers.

But equally important is that we begin this debate with a clear understanding of what Social Security is and why it was created before we begin proposing radical solutions. And also we must be careful not to confuse the issues while trying to solve the problem.

First and foremost, we must remember that Social Security is a safety net below which no American will fall. It is a retirement security program, it is a disability insurance program, and it is a survivor insurance program. It is not a 401(k) or an individual retirement account. Any reform must not destroy the safety net or it will destroy the essence of the program.

Second, we must not confuse solvency with return on investment. The foremost issue is the preservation of the existing Social Security system through and beyond the baby boom retirement period. Since it is a pay-as-you-go social insurance program, as the ratio of workers to retirees contracts, annual benefit costs will exceed revenues and eventually reserves. To maintain the current benefit structure is a solvency question addressed more by structural issues than return on investment.

Third, most so-called privatization proposals do not address either the

safety net or solvency, but rather return on investment. This is not a panacea and we should be cautious. Replacing the existing Social Security system with private retirement accounts may well increase the return on investment over the current system for some, but it could also eliminate the safety net without a huge government subsidy costing trillions of dollars. And even in the era of the bull market and the 9,000-point Dow, we must remember that with yield comes risk. Seven times in the 1970s and the 1980s the real value of the S&P 500 was 40 percent below what it has been in the previous 10 years. If investors missed the market, it could cost them.

Fourth, the bill we should be debating is the budget resolution and what to do with the surplus. Included in the \$5.4 trillion debt is \$600 billion of Treasury bonds owned by the Social Security Trust Fund. We should give some serious thought to begin paying down the debt, growing national income, and making Social Security solvent for the baby boom generation.

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. Speaker, could I inquire of the Chair how much time is remaining on either side?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SNOWBARGER). The gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. BUNNING) has 11½ minutes remaining, and the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Mrs. KENNELLY) has 14 minutes remaining.

Mrs. KENNELLY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM).

(Mr. STENHOLM asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for the work of the gentleman from Texas (Chairman ARCHER) and the Committee on Ways and Means on this legislation. However, I respectfully disagree with the assessment that the solution to Social Security reform is establishment of another commission.

Mr. Speaker, there have been numerous commissions, panels, et cetera, that have diagnosed the problems facing Social Security. They have offered countless options to address these problems. We do not have a shortage of proposals for reforming the Social Security system.

Next month the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. KOLBE) and I will join Senators JUDD GREGG and JOHN BREAUX in introducing legislation incorporating the recommendations of the National Commission on Retirement Policy organized by the Center for Strategic and International Studies. This proposal will address the issue of retirement savings in general, in addition to the future of Social Security.

It reflects several months of work of a bipartisan commission composed of a diverse group of experts as well as Members of Congress. I doubt that an external commission will know what is politically viable. Only Members of Congress, the people's elected rep-

resentatives, are qualified to decide what are forms the American public is willing to support in a program as important as Social Security.

Members of Congress are elected to provide leadership on issues facing our Nation. Our constituents expect and deserve to have their elected representatives make the tough choices necessary to ensure that the Social Security program is strengthened and preserved.

Expert commissions are useful in bringing new ideas into the debate and helping Congress understand the issues. We are past that point on this issue. There are more than enough expert reports that identify the problems and offer ideas for solutions. Now is the time for elected officials to begin doing our job of taking these proposals and putting together a politically viable proposal that the public will support.

Earlier this year, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. KOLBE) and I introduced legislation establishing a special bipartisan bicameral committee of Congress so that those of us elected to make tough decisions would be able to work through the regular legislative process to take all the proposals that have been developed and put together bipartisan Social Security reform legislation that can be voted into law. We submitted an amendment to the Committee on Rules yesterday that attempted to incorporate some of the ideas from our super committee proposal into the commission, but were not able to offer that amendment today.

There is no question that legislation of this magnitude cannot receive the confidence of the American public or Congress unless it is bipartisan from the beginning. The failure of health care reform in 1994 made this crystal clear.

I am pleased that the President has learned this lesson by allowing a bipartisan discussion to go forward on Social Security instead of unilaterally offering a proposal of his own. While I agree very strongly that we must maintain bipartisanship in the Social Security debate, I do not believe that a commission is necessary. The President is demonstrating the presidential leadership that will be essential to maintaining bipartisanship. Speaker GINGRICH, Majority Leader LOTT and other Republican leaders have all expressed a commitment to Social Security reform. And I am committed to doing my part to speak out against those who attempt to politicize this debate from left or right.

Also, I want to speak briefly in support of the motion to recommit stating that the entire budget surplus be reserved until we enact Social Security reform. Reserving the budget surplus for Social Security is not a substitute for structural reforms of Social Security but it will give us a running start towards structural Social Security reform. Reserving the surplus for Social Security reform will make it easier to

enact policies which provide a strong Social Security system for future retirees.

Proposals to use the surplus for any other reasons, including the proposals to create individual savings accounts to supplement Social Security reform now, will make our task much more difficult, that task of comprehensive Social Security reform. While I strongly support the concept of individual savings accounts within the context of comprehensive legislation, we should not enact individual accounts on a piecemeal basis without knowing how they will fit within a comprehensive reform.

Mrs. KENNELLY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN).

Mr. GREEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Mrs. KENNELLY) for yielding me this time. Mr. Speaker, we have a "threefer" here from Texas.

Social Security represents one of the most successful programs ever enacted by our U.S. Government. It along with Medicare are the crown jewels, as we call them, of Democratic legislative accomplishments from Franklin Roosevelt to Lyndon JOHNSON.

Today I will vote to establish a national dialogue on Social Security. It is important that we start this process immediately, so that we have ample time to consider a variety of proposals and have time to develop the best way to save Social Security for the future generations. As Members of Congress, this is one of our greatest responsibilities.

Congress created this program to raise the income level of senior citizens above the poverty line. It has been so successful in the 63 years, and I hope that my Republican colleagues have learned how important Social Security and Medicare is to all Americans. We do not need to gamble with Social Security funds and invest them in fly-by-night schemes. We need to make sure they are there not just for the generation that is enjoying the benefits now, but for the next generation and the next generation, to make sure we do not slip back into poverty for our senior citizens.

Mrs. KENNELLY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. KLINK).

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Mr. KLINK. Mr. Speaker, this is a great debate for us to have. Many people may not realize it, but my home State of Pennsylvania has one of the highest populations of rural elderly, and I cannot tell my colleagues how important Social Security is to them and to their families.

For many people of my district, the Social Security system is the only protection that they and their families have from being totally impoverished. Without Social Security, half of our most vulnerable seniors and disabled citizens would be living in poverty.

We are all concerned about Social Security. Created by a Democratic President, Social Security has kept millions of American seniors out of poverty. It is a sacred covenant between the American people and their government which the Democrats are dedicated to preserving.

A national dialogue on the future of Social Security is a good idea. Bipartisan panels on Social Security are a good idea. A White House conference is a good idea. All of these things are good.

But my main concern is we sit here in Washington, make ourselves look good by really setting up a panel and opportunity to talk about Social Security, but then, Mr. Speaker, none of this is going to amount to anything more than a lot of hot air unless we all commit ourselves right here and now to make sure that the budget surplus does not get spent on tax cuts or government programs, but is held in reserve until we have ensured the future of the solvency of Social Security.

Mrs. KENNELLY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO).

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the National Dialogue on Social Security Act. Social Security is one of our greatest success stories. For over 60 years, since its creation by President Franklin Roosevelt, it has been an independent provider of financial security to hard-working men and women in their retirement years.

When we consider its success, prior to Social Security's enactment, retirement meant insecurity and poverty for too many of our senior citizens. Today the program has become a safety net for millions of seniors and their families. It is estimated that without Social Security, over half of the elderly would be living in poverty.

We are all aware of the demographic shifts that threaten the solvency of the Social Security system in the next 30 years. It is our responsibility as Members of Congress to unite Americans in the effort to reform and preserve Social Security. It must be there, not just for our generation, but for our children and our grandchildren, too.

I caution my colleagues, however, any change must be thoughtfully debated and carefully considered. Any reform must strengthen Social Security's future while maintaining the underlying philosophy which is the foundation of its success, a guarantee of financial stability for the elderly.

Contrary to what some of my Republican colleagues believe, we cannot play fast and loose with Social Security. It must not become just another investment vehicle subject to the uncertainty and the fickleness of the market. That is not a guarantee. It also should not be sacrificed for tax cuts or experiments with personal retirement accounts. Social Security must come first. The guarantee of a secure retirement must come first.

I support recommitting this bill for amendment to save the budget surplus until Congress takes real action on Social Security. The time for reform is now, but it must be real reform. We must guarantee that American men and women who work hard, pay their taxes, and play by the rules will not have to struggle in their golden years. I look forward to the coming discussion of how we, in fact, preserve Social Security, support real reform, support future generations, support the dialogue.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3546, the National Dialogue on Social Security Act, and urge my colleagues to support this worthy piece of legislation.

The intent of this legislation is to initiate a national dialogue on the future of the Social Security Program. Such a dialogue is a necessary component of any future reforms that are needed to ensure the long-term stability of the system.

While Social Security has been an unparalleled success over the past sixty years, its future is being driven by negative demographic trends. The baby boomer generation is nearing retirement and subsequent generations are not large enough to subsidize the boomers' projected demands on the Social Security system.

Current estimates disclose that the Social Security system will start paying out more benefits than it receives in contributions around the year 2013. This incoming/outgoing ratio will gradually worsen until the program reaches insolvency in 2032.

The problems facing Social Security are not immediate. However, the longer we wait to make reforms, the more painful those reforms will be.

The President has already initiated a dialogue on Social Security reform. I am pleased that this bill will allow Congress to join this discussion. It is important to address this subject while our window of opportunity remains open. Furthermore, Congress needs to do this in a manner that is above politics. The subject of Social Security reform is far too important to be influenced by partisan politics. This bill provides for this through the creation of a bipartisan panel to examine all of the various proposals that have been advanced over the past year.

Mr. Speaker, Social Security has played a vital role in our Nation's success and prosperity this century. Accordingly, I urge my colleagues to support this worthy legislation to ensure that it continues to do so long into the future.

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the nation is now engaging in a dialogue about the future of Social Security, our most important government program. President Clinton deserves credit for fueling this discussion. Without a doubt, we must take steps to preserve Social Security for today's seniors—and tomorrow's. But as part of this effort, we must also address the current inequities facing women of retirement age across America.

Let me share a few facts. Women live seven years longer than men on average—so they have an increased need for economic security in their later years. Women move in and out of the workforce more than men to raise children and care for elderly relatives so their earnings can change dramatically from year to

year. And, women are still paid less than men—about 70 cents less on the dollar and three quarters of women earn less than \$25,000 per year.

As a result, women have far less retirement income than men. Less than a third of all female retirees have pensions. And of those women with pensions, the average benefit is 40 percent less than men's. Equally troubling, women's average monthly Social Security checks are 25 percent smaller than men's.

Given these disturbing figures, is it any surprise that fully one-quarter of women over 65 live in poverty, that women make up three quarters of the elderly poor?

The good news is that there are ways to make Social Security fairer to women. I am working on a package of Social Security measures to improve the system for women. For example, one bill would improve Social Security benefits for those who take time out of the workforce to provide child care or elder care.

Unfortunately, it does not appear that these issues are getting the attention they deserve. As economist Kathleen Feldstein recently noted in the New York Times, some reform proposals currently on the table would perpetuate or even exacerbate the problems facing women in retirement.

Mr. Speaker, I am not passing judgment on any reform plan today. I would simply urge that as my colleagues, the Administration, and the citizens of this nation work together to preserve Social Security, we pay close attention to the unique circumstances which affect women's retirement. We must use this crucial debate to improve the economic security of older women and future generations.

Ms. KILPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to reluctantly speak out against H.R. 3546, the National Dialogue on Social Security Act of 1998. This bill will do injustice and harm to the effort to resolve the problems facing the Social Security system. The odd adage "if it aint broke, don't fix it" applies to this bill. Our bipartisan task force is working hard toward resolving the problems of the historic "third rail" of American politics. We do not need another task force to undermine the hard work and difficult decisions that need to be made.

As a member of the Social Security task force, I must commend the collegial bipartisan manner in which the task force has conducted its business and I take this moment to recognize Congressmen ROY BLUNT, R-Mo. and BILL DELAHUNT, D-Ma. for their leadership.

I am, however, mystified at Republican efforts to implement this legislation. In my opinion, H.R. 3546 duplicates the current bipartisan process instituted to resolve the problems facing Social Security. This is a tremendous waste of taxpayer dollars and the energy and effort of members of Congress.

Social Security, created by a Democratic President, and used by Democrats, Republicans, and Independents has kept millions of seniors out of poverty. For a majority of minorities who are elderly, Social Security is their major source of income. While I applaud my colleagues efforts to begin another discussion to save Social Security, the fact that the members of the "Dialogue Council" and "Panel" will be chosen by the majority leadership is surprising. Such a nonpartisan issue should not be drawn into the maelstrom of politics.

I find it more than a coincidence that this bill sounds a lot like the current national discussion about the future of Social Security which the President began in Kansas City. The mandates of this legislation directly compete with the process currently underway. I maintain that this legislation, put forth by the republican leadership, is simply an effort to confuse an issue vital to the well being of the nation. Unfortunately, this legislation reeks of an election year attempt by the Republicans to appear concerned about an issue that the people have mandated important.

I am further concerned that because the bill appoints a Council and Panel so clearly skewed to favor the majority, it will not foster the bipartisan debate needed and desired by most in the House. This bill will allow the Republican leadership in the House and Senate to stack the Dialogue Council and Panel with members who clearly support the privatization of the Social Security system.

As a member of the Social Security Task Force, I am objectively analyzing the pros and cons of privatizing social security. Any conclusion on this issue must be made after Congress and the nation has had the opportunity to examine all options as to what is clearly demonstrated to be in the best interest of the American people. The actions we take today on Social Security will affect our parents and the lives of our children. The actions we take today will affect the course of America in the coming decades. It is my charge, as a member of the Task Force, to make the tough decisions and recommendations to preserve this vital program. I only hope the American people see this bill for what it is, and recognize that this is an election year attempt to appear to address this critical issue.

Ms. MCCARTHY of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of a national dialogue on Social Security. I was honored that the Concord Coalition and the American Association of Retired Persons chose to host the first town hall meeting on Social Security reform in my district, the Fifth Congressional District of Missouri. The President's participation in this bipartisan forum and numerous others around the nation, ensures that a thoughtful and inclusive national dialogue will enable all Americans to express their views as to the future of Social Security well into the 21st century.

The President is encouraging Congress to reserve the anticipated budget surplus for bolstering Social Security and reducing the national debt. Congress must take steps to implement the President's call for action. I urge my colleagues to resist any delays in action which would result in the anticipated surplus being dedicated to other programs. We must preserve the integrity of Social Security to afford all citizens of this country that this successful safety net will be there for them when they retire, as it has been since President Roosevelt initiated it in 1935.

Mr. COYNE. Mr. Speaker, President Clinton recently initiated a national dialogue on the future of Social Security, which will enable Americans of all ages to participate in any decisions that are made about Social Security's future. By introducing H.R. 3546, the National Dialogue on Social Security Act of 1998, the Republican leadership has shown that they, too, believe it is critical to have a thoughtful discussion about Social Security before taking action.

Fortunately, we have time to have that discussion. Yesterday, Social Security's trustees

reported that the trust fund will be fully solvent until 2032 under current policies. This does not mean we should ignore Social Security's long-term problems. But it does mean we can take time for a thorough and thoughtful discussion of all the issues involved.

We do not yet know what the short-term cost of fixing Social Security will be. That is why it is critical that we save all of the budget surplus until we know what the Social Security program needs and how much it will cost.

Some people would like to spend the surplus now. Their suggestions range from tax cuts to new government programs to small individual retirement accounts. But it would be fiscally irresponsible to spend the surplus. By saving it, we guarantee that the money will be there if we need it for Social Security and we reduce the public debt, fueling economic expansion and a higher standard of living for future workers and retirees.

Social Security is one of the most successful programs ever—without it, over half of the elderly would be extremely poor. Thirty-eight million elderly people depend on Social Security to pay for the most basic necessities of life. We owe it to them and to the next generation of retirees to save all of the surplus for Social Security while we have a careful and thoughtful discussion about how to protect the program over the long term.

I strongly support the amendment to H.R. 3546 which Representatives RANGEL and KENNELLY offered in the Ways and Means Committee. It would have guaranteed that the surplus was saved for Social Security. By contrast, the much weaker amendment that was adopted would allow the surplus to be spent before we have discussed all the options for Social Security. I would urge my colleagues to support the motion to recommit, which would amend the bill to prevent the surplus from being spent for any purpose until we decide how to solve Social Security's long-term problems.

Mr. HULSHOF. Mr. Speaker, we face—all of us—a daunting challenge. To solve it, we must begin our work now and put partisan differences aside.

As we proceed, we must do two things: First and foremost, we must honor our commitment to today's seniors and those who will retire soon. The green checks the Social Security Administration mails each month to one in six Americans are the backbone of retirement income for the nation. Secondly, we must also protect younger Americans so that Social Security works for them as well.

Today is a good time to reaffirm that Social Security was originally intended to supplement retirement. It is just one leg of what is referred to as a 3-legged stool with the other two legs being private pensions and personal savings. On the latter point, Congress continues to look for ways to encourage personal savings so that thriftiness is rewarded not punished.

This discussion today is about the extent to which future retirement should be a public responsibility and how much it would be a private one. If we delay reform, we shorten the time needed by the American people to accumulate savings and adjust their plans for retirement. Long-term changes must be made while the "baby boomer" generation is still in the work force and has time to make adjustments.

While the solvency of Social Security is a slow-motion crisis, to America's workers in

their 20's and 30's, there is an immediate crisis—a crisis of confidence. Instead of taking advantage of the tried and true power of compound interest, taxpayers are faced to put retirement savings in a Washington program that earns much less than a traditional savings account.

We are standing on the threshold of a great new opportunity: the first federal surplus in a generation. Ladies and Gentlemen, the American people have never retreated from a crisis and we must not do so on this issue.

Former President Gerald Ford, in a speech a year ago, pointed out that the Founders of our country designed a government in which it is easier to do nothing than to do a great deal all at once. But they also counted on the will and wisdom of Americans to conceive and implement reforms where necessary. Our conscience demands what our children deserve. God willing we will disappoint neither.

Mr. CRANE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 3546, the National Dialogue on Social Security Act. This legislation could not be more timely with the announcement yesterday that in the year 2032, the Social Security Fund will be exhausted. We must take action to address the long-term needs of the Social Security system and it must be done so that Americans are confident they will have a reliable source of income during their retirement years.

The intent of this bill is to create a bipartisan, eight-member panel which will report its recommendations on long-term changes to Congress by February 1, 1999. The other important component of H.R. 3546 is to initiate and coordinate a truly inclusive national dialogue which will also issue a report. The national dialogue will allow representatives of all Americans, from the children of the Great Depression to the children of the third millennium, to participate in a process affecting their future. It is my strong belief that proposals to incorporate the private sector and promoting options can be developed that will, at the same time, ensure that the current beneficiaries continue to receive the benefits they have been promised. In any event, I look forward to receiving the panel's recommendations at the appropriate time.

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation to create an expert panel to study Social Security reform. I agree that we need to accelerate a national dialogue about how the Social Security system should prepare for the challenges it will face when the baby boom generation begins to retire, and that a bipartisan panel to design long-range Social Security reform would serve a necessary role in evaluating potential reforms.

The time is now for Social Security reform. We are on the verge of balancing the federal budget for the first time since 1969 and I believe that it would be a clear abdication of our responsibilities if we do not seize this historic moment to implement a lasting reform of Social Security.

The best way to save Social Security is to take politics out of the equation.

As you know, I have been working on Social Security reform since the 1980's. In this Congress, I have introduced H.R. 2929, the most recent version of my Individual Social Security Retirement Account (ISSRA) Act legislation. This bill, developed with noted economist Peter Ferrara, would create a new retirement option for all Americans and fully address the

impending shortcomings of our Social Security system. Rather than using my time here today to advocate any specific legislation, I would like to illustrate my beliefs about how our existing Social Security system should be reformed, and highlight some issues that the proposed expert panel will have to address.

My legislation adheres to three fundamental principles that must be present in any reform to our existing Social Security system. First, existing benefits must be guaranteed without reductions for all current retirees. Second, workers must have the option of staying in existing Social Security, or choose to start an individual account. Finally, we simply cannot levy new taxes to further extend the Ponzi scheme that is our current Social Security system. In contrast, we must consider an eventual tax cut for individual account participants.

The individual accounts created by my ISSRA legislation are not only fiscally sound, but also necessary to any reform that will ensure the survival of our national retirement system. For example, under my plan the Social Security taxes (currently 6.2% of wages paid by both worker and employer, or a total of 12.4%) of those workers who choose to create an ISSRA would be redistributed. Workers and employers would each contribute 5% of wages to an ISSRA (10% total), and workers could make additional contributions of up to 20% of gross income. The remaining 2.4% of the payroll tax would continue to help fund the ongoing obligations of Social Security but could be eliminated 10 years into the transitional period, thus providing a 20% tax cut. Current workers who opt out of traditional Social Security would also receive "recognition bonds" from the government that would pay a portion of their retirement benefit based on the proportion of taxes they had already paid into the current system.

These individually owned and managed accounts should be governed by the same rules currently utilized for IRA accounts, with the exception of the right to withdrawal. All workers choosing to form an individual account could choose from among approved private investment managers. This safeguard would make the system easy to use, and protect unsophisticated investors from potential fraud and abuse.

Like the current system, employee contributions to ISSRA accounts would not be tax deductible, while employer contributions would remain deductible. Investment returns over the years would be tax free until withdrawal, in a manner identical to today's IRAs. During retirement, only half of the benefits would be included in taxable income.

Benefits at retirement would be based on what the individual's ISSRA account could support. The worker could choose to purchase an annuity or make periodic withdrawals in such a manner that the account would not become exhausted within the beneficiary's lifetime. Retirement age for individuals choosing to utilize an ISSRA would be variable after age 59 and one-half, based on funds available in their account.

As a safeguard, a minimum benefit would be guaranteed for all individuals assuring that no worker would fall below the minimum necessary for a dignified retirement. This benefit would supplement an individual's shortfall in private benefits and would be financed from general revenues and the eventual surplus in the Social Security Trust Fund.

Under my ISSRA plan, and similar reform plans utilizing individual accounts, benefits for retirees would grow enormously. Of particular importance to me is the plight of the working poor, who would receive increased benefits under my plan as opposed to their level of benefits under Social Security. Indeed, the working poor would experience the largest gains in retirement benefits under my plan. For example, an individual working for a minimum wage would receive more than three times the benefits promised by our current system. In addition, these financially vulnerable individuals would also have substantial funds to leave their heirs thereby breaking the cycle of poverty.

Up until now, the costs associated with the implementation of a Social Security reform like my ISSRA plan were thought to be too severe to be addressed through reasonable measures. However, projections of the fiscal impact of this plan have demonstrated that the transition costs can be financed without new taxes or any benefit cuts for current retirees. According to a recently published analysis by Peter Ferrara, transition deficits under my ISSRA plan would disappear within only 14 years.

Indeed, in any reform plan using individual accounts, transition costs can be accommodated through a number of reform measures designed to strengthen the Social Security Trust Fund. The first would be the displacement of Social Security benefits as workers choose the private system. Although starting slowly, these savings will grow substantially over time. Immediate savings would be realized by transferring responsibility for the disability and pre-retirement benefits of all individuals who opt out to private disability and life insurance carriers. Rather than using Social Security funds, these benefits would be accommodated by the private marketplace through Treasury Department approved ISSRA fund managers.

Further savings would result from the waiver of past tax payments. Recognition bonds will be waived for individuals under the age of 30 who choose to utilize the new ISSRAs, and the Social Security Trust Fund will not be expended for their retirement benefits.

Several sources of revenue would also be available to finance the transition. The continuing payroll tax of 2.4% for workers opting out of traditional Social Security would be credited to the Trust Fund for a period of ten years. This revenue, when combined with revenues resulting from the sale of a new issue of "Social Security Trust Fund Bonds" would finance the majority of transition costs.

The net effect of these measures would be a Social Security Trust Fund with net revenues in 14 and a large positive balance after 22 years. Eventually these surpluses would grow large enough to cover losses in revenue from a 20% payroll tax cut and reduce the national debt.

Not directly accounted for in my plan, but substantially aiding the federal government in meeting transition costs would be the generation of substantial new revenues as a result of new savings and investment in a reformed Social Security system. The net increased savings resulting from the implementation of my ISSRA plan or another plan utilizing individual accounts would also lead to significant economic growth, and increases in productivity, wages and jobs.

Clearly, support is growing among the American people for Social Security reform. A

recent CATO Institute poll indicated that 69 percent of respondents favor reforms that would allow them to invest privately the amount they pay into Social Security; 74 percent support a plan that gives people a choice of staying in traditional Social Security or moving to a new system; and 77 percent want a system that allows individuals to control investment of their retirement funds. My ISSRA plan includes all of these desirable features, as should any serious Social Security reform proposal. Clearly reform involving optional individual accounts is a comprehensive way to protect the benefits of current retirees, preserve the integrity of the system for future generations, and help sustain the long-term health of our economy.

Our efforts must result in a return to integrity and solvency in a reformed Social Security system that gives every American worker control over his or her retirement destiny.

In closing, I commend Chairman ARCHER for his efforts in moving forward with a national debate about the future of Social Security, and I fully support this critical legislation.

As America ages, we must work together to create new solutions that go beyond Washington's typical quick fixes—and without raising taxes.

Mr. GEPHARDT. Mr. Speaker, I support this bipartisan effort to further a national dialogue on Social Security.

Social Security is the towering achievement of our democracy in the twentieth century. It has bestowed on millions of Americans a measure of financial security and freedom from fear of spending their retirement in impoverishment.

It has taken us decades to build a program that has worked so well to keep retirees out of poverty.

That has been so successful in supplying survival income for widows and their children when their loved one dies unexpectedly. And that has given so many disabled people income when they were unable to work.

It would be a national disgrace if we damage a program that has done so much good for so many people. We shouldn't take any steps that would drastically change the nature of Social Security. And we should make no changes without engaging in an intense dialogue with the American people who overwhelmingly support and fund it.

We are hearing a lot about Social Security from people who want to divert the stream of Social Security payments from the trust fund into equity markets. Who want to change the whole nature of the Social Security system, from one where there is a sacred bond between Americans and their government, to one where there this bond is eliminated.

Many advocates of radical reform want to change Social Security from a safe and secure source of income into a bet on the performance of the stock market.

They want to transform the system from one where Social Security payments are guaranteed, to one where the level of payments will fluctuate based on the volatility of the market.

In their rush to revolutionize, they have forgotten one thing. For most beneficiaries, their Social Security check is not money to put aside, or a source of extra income. For many Americans, their Social Security check is all that stands between them and poverty—it is their only source of income.

To accomplish the drastic changes which they ultimately want, proponents of radical reform are trying to create a panic among all

Americans who have a stake in Social Security. From their comments over the last several months, you would be convinced that the entire system was in risk of imminent collapse. That the best bet would be for Americans to take their money and head for the hills, or at least for Wall Street.

This is irresponsible and just plain wrong. As yesterday's trustee's report made clear, there is absolutely no risk of imminent or long-term collapse of the system.

We should be open to all reforms that work to protect the health of Social Security into the second half of the next century, but the basic structure of Social Security must endure. The system must continue to serve retirees, survivors, and people with disabilities. Benefit levels must remain adequate to allow beneficiaries to live a life of dignity. And the payments must be guaranteed to all participants in the system.

The President has told the American people that all budget surpluses should be dedicated to the Social Security trust fund until long-term reform is accomplished.

If we are serious about protecting Social Security for the next century, for all present and future beneficiaries, it is critical that we earmark these funds. This is the best use of this unexpected bonus, not for short-term election-year fixes.

I urge my colleagues to support the motion to recommit that will reiterate the intention of the Congress to dedicate budget surpluses to Social Security. This is the best way to begin our dialogue with the American people—kicking off the process with a real sign of our commitment to the system.

I know when I go door to door in St. Louis, there is no groundswell or razing the system or privatizing the process. Seniors and younger workers are all concerned about the ability of the system to pay out in the future. But no one I have talked to wants to dispose of the system which so many have relied on for so long.

I agree with Bob Dole's recent remarks—that "this is an issue which is easy to demagogue, but where we have an obligation to tread carefully." We need to move forward without destroying the system which has taken so long to achieve.

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, most Americans living today were born well after the Great Depression. They are not marked by the fear of economic loss because—as a society—they have not experienced it.

It may well be that those who have not lived through the Depression do not appreciate the need for a social safety net. Today's adults almost assume that a good economy will last forever.

In such a climate, more people may be less appreciative of safety nets, like Social Security, and more convinced that self-reliance will suffice.

But economic self-reliance is only workable for those who are reasonably well off and who understand the value of savings. Nobel prize winning economist Modigliani, my economics professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, taught me this lesson: people save only when they have money to save and perceive the need to save. With our national savings rate at an all time low of 3.8% of disposable income. I cannot help but conclude that Americans today do not perceive the need to save for the future.

Self-reliance also assumes a certain level of sophistication to ensure that invested savings will grow. That requires knowledge about how to balance investment opportunities and risks. Americans have a ways to go in this regard as well.

Social Security was never intended to meet all the requirement needs of Americans. The three-legged stool of secure retirement also requires worker pensions and private savings.

We have a voluntary, employment-based pension system. Sadly, only about half of all Americans have an employer-based pension; small businesses tend not to cover workers at all.

The erosion of pension security in the United States has been dramatic. Thirty years ago, most large employers structured pensions to look like our Social Security system with an employer and employee contribution and a guaranteed benefit payment related to the workers wages.

More and more today, Americans have voluntary savings plans with a percentage of salary saved with each paycheck. These savings plans allow us to see how much workers are saving in voluntary, tax-subsidized plans, how sophisticated they are about their retirement investments, and whether workers actually use their retirement savings for other purposes.

Early results are troubling. Workers often withdraw their pension funds when they leave a job and do not redeposit their pension into another savings plan. And some withdraw their pension funds even though they do not change their place of work.

1996 data on pension withdrawals show 60% of the distributions (in terms of the number of withdrawals, not dollars) from pension plans were not redeposited into another retirement savings plan. 79% of all the dollars distributed from pensions were redeposited in a pension savings plan.

Overall, affluent people with large pensions tended to redeposit their pension funds; lower-income people with smaller pensions often withdrew pension funds for consumption.

Put another way, 95% of the distributions over \$100,000 were redeposited into a new pension savings plan.

Only 20% of the distributions under \$2,500 were redeposited into a new pension savings plan.

In addition to size of the pension, age and sex are factors in whether pensions will be reserved for retirement needs: young workers and women tend to withdraw all their pension funds more often than other workers.

A recent General Accounting Office (GAO) report studies the implications for women in particular, should the United States move toward a privatized retirement system. The report points out that women's Social Security benefits are lower than men's benefits, due to their lower earning levels.

Proponents of privatization argue that individuals might take on more risk in the management of individual accounts to achieve a higher rate of return. But privatization could exacerbate the gender differences now found in retirement income for men and women.

Men's pensions funds, on average, are twice the size of women's pension funds.

Women make more conservative investments than men when they direct their retirement savings investments themselves, according to GAO and other economic studies.

The GAO found that women ages 51 to 61 had a lower percentage of their total assets in

stocks, mutual funds, and investment trusts than men did. These assets are riskier, but have higher yields than others, such as certificates of deposits, savings accounts, or government bonds. With very conservative investments, the investment return may not be adequate to see many women through their retirement years.

Before we enter down the path of privatization, we should be mindful the current savings rates and practices of Americans. We should not assume that voluntary private savings will ever replace the benefits of Social Security.

Mrs. KENNELLY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the remainder of our time.

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time and call for the previous question.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 410, the previous question is ordered on the bill, as amended.

The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

MOTION TO RECOMMIT OFFERED BY MR.

POMEROY

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I offer a motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SNOWBARGER). Is the gentleman opposed to the bill?

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I do oppose the bill in its present form.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion to recommit.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mr. POMEROY moves to recommit the bill H.R. 3546 to the Committee on Ways and Means with instructions to report the same back to the House forthwith with the following amendment:

Add at the end the following:

TITLE III—SAVE SOCIAL SECURITY
FIRST

SEC. 301. SAVING THE UNIFIED BUDGET SURPLUS UNTIL COMPREHENSIVE ACTION HAS BEEN UNDERTAKEN TO SAVE SOCIAL SECURITY.

The unified budget surplus should be reserved until—

(1) the Congress has undertaken comprehensive action to save social security for current and future generations, and

(2) the Bipartisan Panel to Design Long-Range Social Security Reform has reported its recommendations.

SEC. 302. EFFECTIVE DATE.

The provisions of this title shall be effective through March 31, 1999.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY) is recognized for 5 minutes in support of his motion.

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Mrs. KENNELLY), who has been such a strong and constant leader on Social Security.

Mrs. KENNELLY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I support this motion to recommit because it says in no uncertain terms we intend to save Social Security first. By that I mean we intend to save the budget surplus for protecting Social Security's long-term solvency.

The bill before us has a statement that begins in that direction but leaves some room for doubt. This motion makes clear that we should act to maintain Social Security solvency before we establish any new programs, including private retirement accounts.

I should not have to remind my colleagues that two-thirds of retired Americans count on Social Security for more than one-half their income. This is a system that has worked. It will continue to work if we dedicate ourselves to that purpose. Again, let us keep the old promises before we make any new ones.

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, this commission by its very design is about analysis and discussion now, leading to legislative action later, hopefully in 1999. Now, the motion to recommit will put present meaning to a bill that is otherwise merely about future action. Let us agree, and let us agree across this partisan aisle that today we make the commitment jointly that the surplus will be preserved for Social Security.

What a wonderful opportunity this surplus presents to us to show the country how seriously we hold Social Security and our resolve to do something meaningful for the long-term security of this vital program. Protect the surplus. Dedicate the surplus. Hold the surplus for Social Security.

Let us face it, the great majority of us in this body have never seen a surplus. The first one we have had since 1969 and, oh, the things we would love to do with it, the investments we would like to make in highways and other things, the tax cuts, the many ways we could devote this surplus. Some would even like to begin to move to individual accounts on Social Security this year with the surplus. But let us forestall those plans.

In direct accord with the bill introduced by Chairman BUNNING and co-sponsored by seven Republican Members, this motion to recommit takes the Archer bill and makes only one change to it, an addition; that addition, committing this Congress to holding the surplus for the future of Social Security.

I do not think there is a more important step we can take, in addition to what the bill of the gentleman from Texas represents, than to add to that bill what this motion would achieve, and that is the commitment right here, right now that the surplus will be held for Social Security.

It was only 3 months ago when the President challenged us from that pulpit, save Social Security first. This is our first opportunity in this forum to cast a vote on that commitment, save Social Security first.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a partisan issue. This is an issue of commitment and accord between this body and the American people. We will address Social Security. We will address Social Security in a bipartisan and responsible way to preserve it through the

21st Century. But let us begin today by committing that surplus to this.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentleman from Kentucky opposed to the motion?

Mr. BUNNING. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. BUNNING) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the gentleman from North Dakota if he has looked at H.R. 3351. It was a bill that I put in in March. It is a bill that does exactly what the gentleman's motion to recommit does, only it does it separately from this commission bill. It walls off any surplus that we get in the year 1998 and says that none of this money can be recycled out in debt, and all of it is dedicated to when we have a settlement in the Social Security system.

We debated this issue at length in the Committee on Ways and Means. We worked very hard to get a consensus on language that is in the bill in section 206 of the report language. And it says a Sense of The Congress: It is the sense of Congress that, pending the report of the panel under subsection (a), which is the panel the gentleman spoke about, the Federal unified budget surplus should be dedicated to reducing the Federal debt by the public, which is what my bill would do, increasing the retirement income security of individuals and ensuring the solvency of the Social Security system.

It is my contention that the gentleman's motion is unnecessary and duplicates language already in the bill. We think that it is totally appropriate that the agreement that was reached in the Committee on Ways and Means and is in the language of the bill should be voted on without consideration of the gentleman's motion to recommit.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY) for a question.

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. I want to tell the gentleman that I have been relieved to have a leader of his stature and with his jurisdiction on Social Security advocating capturing the surplus for Social Security and exclusively for Social Security as he has done and does in his legislation.

I therefore believe that we might be in accord on this motion to recommit, which essentially takes the gentleman's legislation and would enact it today. If I had a bill and the gentleman had a motion to recommit that essentially passed my bill today, I would probably think that was a good thing.

Mr. BUNNING. We already debated this in the Committee on Ways and Means, and the bill that we passed out has consensus language that has three issues involved. One is to reduce the debt held by the public, which my bill would definitely touch upon. The other is increasing the retirement income of individuals, which is what we want to do with the salvage of Social Security. The other was to ensure the solvency

of the Social Security system, which is exactly why we have formed the commission.

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman continue to yield?

Mr. BUNNING. I am glad to yield to the gentleman from North Dakota.

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, those provisions do not begin to have the clarity the motion to recommit offers. While the gentleman does talk about some consensus effort within the committee, in fact there was a protracted debate in the committee and a voice vote where there was a clear divide against including language that spelled out surplus—

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. Speaker, I would like to reclaim my time and be able to close at least.

I sincerely believe that this is a totally unnecessary and duplicative motion to recommit. I urge defeat of the motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to recommit.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to recommit.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the yeas appeared to have it.

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Evidently a quorum is not present.

The Sergeant at Arms will notify absent Members.

Pursuant to the provisions of clause 5 of rule XV, the Chair announces that he will reduce to a minimum of 5 minutes the period of time within which a vote by electronic device, if ordered, will be taken on the question of passage.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 197, nays 223, not voting 12, as follows:

[Roll No. 115]

YEAS—197

Abercrombie	Condit	Frost
Ackerman	Conyers	Furse
Allen	Costello	Gejdenson
Andrews	Coyne	Goode
Baesler	Cramer	Gordon
Baldacci	Cummings	Green
Barcia	Danner	Gutierrez
Barrett (WI)	Davis (FL)	Hall (OH)
Becerra	Davis (IL)	Hall (TX)
Bentsen	DeFazio	Hamilton
Berman	DeGette	Harman
Berry	Delahunt	Hastings (FL)
Bishop	Deutsch	Hefner
Blagojevich	Dicks	Hilliard
Blumenauer	Dingell	Hinchey
Bonior	Doggett	Hinojosa
Borski	Dooley	Holden
Boswell	Doyle	Hooley
Boucher	Edwards	Hoyer
Boyd	Engel	Jackson (IL)
Brown (FL)	Eshoo	Jackson-Lee
Brown (OH)	Etheridge	(TX)
Capps	Evans	Jefferson
Cardin	Farr	John
Carson	Fattah	Johnson (WI)
Clay	Fazio	Johnson, E. B.
Clayton	Filner	Kanjorski
Clement	Ford	Kaptur
Clyburn	Frank (MA)	Kennedy (MA)

NAYS—8

Conyers
Frank (MA)
Kucinich

Martinez
Nadler
Oberstar

Paul
Sanders

NOT VOTING—11

Barr
Bateman
Brown (CA)
Dixon

Gephardt
Gonzalez
Meek (FL)
Sandlin

Schumer
Smith (OR)
Wise

□ 1848

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. WISE. Mr. Speaker, because I was picking my children up from school I was unable to get back to the capitol to vote on H.R. 3546, the National Dialogue on Social Security Act.

I ask that the RECORD reflect that had I been here I would have supported the motion to recommit. I also ask that the RECORD reflect that had I been here I would have supported final passage of this measure and voted "aye."

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 3605

Mr. BASS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to have my name removed as a cosponsor of H.R. 3605.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SNOWBARGER). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Hampshire?

There was no objection.

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 3605

Mr. GILCHREST. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to have my name removed as a cosponsor of H.R. 3605.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

RESIGNATION AS MEMBER OF COMMITTEE ON BANKING AND FINANCIAL SERVICES

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following resignation as a member of the Committee on Banking and Financial Services:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, April 29, 1998.

Hon. NEWT GINGRICH,
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: I am writing to inform you that I am resigning from the Committee on Banking and Financial Services.

Sincerely,

ESTEBAN E. TORRES,
Member of Congress.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the resignation is accepted.

There was no objection.

ELECTION OF MEMBER TO CERTAIN STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

Mr. FAZIO of California. Mr. Speaker, at the direction of the Democratic

Caucus, I offer a privileged resolution (H. Res. 412) and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

HOUSE RESOLUTION 412

Resolved, That the following named Member be, and is hereby, elected to the following standing committees of the House of Representatives:

To the Committee on Banking and Financial Services: BARBARA LEE of California.

To the Committee on Science: BARBARA LEE of California.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF S. 1502, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA STUDENT OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIP ACT OF 1997

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 105-501) on the resolution (H. Res. 413) providing for consideration of the Senate bill (S. 1502) entitled the "District of Columbia Student Opportunity Scholarship Act of 1997", which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION WAIVING REQUIREMENT OF CLAUSE 4(b) OF RULE XI WITH RESPECT TO SAME DAY CONSIDERATION OF CERTAIN RESOLUTIONS

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 105-502) on the resolution (H. Res. 414) waiving a requirement of clause 4(b) of rule XI with respect to consideration of certain resolutions reported from the Committee on Rules, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

HIGHER EDUCATION AMENDMENTS OF 1998

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 411 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 411

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 1(b) of rule XXIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 6) to extend the authorization of programs under the Higher Education Act of 1965, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce. After general debate the

bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. It shall be in order to consider as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the five-minute rule the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Education and the Workforce now printed in the bill, modified by the amendments printed in part 1 of the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution. That amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be considered by title rather than by section. Each title shall be considered as read. All points of order against that amendment in the nature of a substitute are waived. Before consideration of any other amendment it shall be in order to consider the amendment printed in part 2 of the report of the Committee on Rules, if offered by Representative Goodling or his designee. That amendment shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for 20 minutes equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole. All points of order against that amendment are waived. If that amendment is adopted, the provisions of the amendment in the nature of a substitute as then perfected shall be considered as original text for the purpose of further amendment. No other amendment to the amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be in order except those printed in the portion of the Congressional Record designated for that purpose in clause 6 of rule XXIII. Printed amendments shall be considered as read. The chairman of the Committee of the Whole may: (1) postpone until a time during further consideration in the Committee of the Whole a request for a recorded vote on any amendment; and (2) reduce to five minutes the minimum time for electronic voting on any postponed question that follows another electronic vote without intervening business: *Provided*, That the minimum time for electronic voting on the first in any series of questions shall be 15 minutes. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. Any Member may demand a separate vote in the House on any amendment adopted in the Committee of the Whole to the bill or to the amendment in the nature of a substitute ultimately considered as original text. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, for the purposes of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. HALL), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purposes of debate only.

(Mr. HASTINGS of Washington asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, H.Res. 411 is a modified open rule waiving all points of order against consideration of the bill. The bill provides 1 hour of general debate to be divided equally between the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce.