

CONTROVERSY 5: WHAT IS THE FUTURE FOR SOCIAL SECURITY?

[Prepared by Estelle Alexander and Elizabeth Sullivan of the AARP Research Information Center (March, 2005)]

The following are resources that may be helpful in teaching about Social Security issues:

I. AgeLine (<http://research.aarp.org/ageline/home.html>) allows you to search on any issue related to Social Security, and provides summaries of aging-related articles, books, and reports with links to selected full-text publications. Check “Searches to Go” for easy references, including:

- Social Security: Recent AARP Publications
- Social Security: Recent Books and Reports
- Social Security: Recent Journal Articles
- Social Security Reform

Produced by the AARP Research Information Center.

II. AARP (www.aarp.org/socialsecurity-aarp) provides information on Social Security reform, privatization, information for consumers, and a retirement calculator. AgeLine produces “To Go” online bibliographies (updated bimonthly) such as:

- Social Security – Recent Research
- Social Security Reform - Recent Research
- Social Security for Consumers

Links to:

- AARP’s position on issues relating to Social Security (<http://www.aarp.org/socialsecurity-aarp>)
- AARP’s Policy on Social Security Privatization (http://www.aarp.org/legislative/elections/Articles/a2003-09-03-ss_policy.html)
- AARP research reports and fact sheets (Economic Security) (<http://research.aarp.org/econ/index.html>)
- News articles from the AARP Bulletin (<http://www.aarp.org/bulletin/socialsec/>)
- Retirement Calculator (http://sites.stockpoint.com/aarp_rc/wm/Retirement/Retirement.asp?act=LOGIN)

AARP’s daily Social Security Blog features constantly changing information covering Current Developments, Issue Analysis, Recent Media Coverage, Views of Opinion Leaders, Recent Perspectives, and developments on the Trust Fund. Available at:

<http://aarp.typepad.com/socialsecurity/>

III. Selected Government Websites about Social Security

- The Official White House Homepage on Social Security (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/social-security/index.html>) includes Bush’s

- plan for reform, fact sheets, and press releases covering the President's Social Security campaign across the U.S.
- U.S. Department of the Treasury: (<http://www.ustreas.gov/>) Includes Secretary John Snow's initiatives to promote President George W. Bush's plan for reforming Social Security.
 - The Social Security Administration's Office of Policy (<http://www.ssa.gov/policy/index.html>) is the focal point for policy analysis and research, evaluation, and statistics. Also check SSA's Publications (<http://www.ssa.gov/pubs>) for resources.
Understanding Social Security <http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/10024.html>
How to request a Social Security statement (<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/mystatement/>)
How retirement benefits are figured (PDF) (<http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/10070.pdf>)

IV. Advocacy Organizations For or Opposed to Privatization

- Americans United To Protect Social Security (Opposed) Formed in February-March 2005 at urging of Democrats in the Senate. Seed money from labor.) So far only news coverage. No Web site as of 3/4/05.
- Moveon.org (<http://www.moveon.org/front/>) Opposed)
- Next USA (<http://www.unitedseniors.org/>) (For) (affiliated with United Seniors)
- Rock The Vote (<http://www.rockthevote.com/>)

V. Public Opinion Websites and Social Security

- Public Agenda (http://www.publicagenda.org/issues/frontdoor.cfm?issue_type=ss) (issue guide on Social Security): a nonpartisan and nonprofit public opinion research organization.
- Pew Research Center (<http://people-press.org/commentary/display.php3?AnalysisID=106>)

VI. Think Tanks and Other Organizations on Social Security

- National Academy on Social Insurance (<http://www.nasi.org>)
- American Enterprise Institute (<http://www.aei.org/>)
- Brookings Institute (<http://www.brookings.org/>)
- CATO Institute (<http://www.socialsecurity.org/>)
- Center for American Progress (<http://www.americanprogress.org>)
- The Century Foundation: Information, analysis, and commentary on the Social Security debate (<http://www.socsec.org/>)
- The Concord Coalition (<http://www.concordcoalition.org>): A nonpartisan grassroots organization promoting fiscal responsibility.)
- Democratic National Committee (<http://www.democrats.org>)

- GOP - Republican National Committee (<http://www.gop.com/Issues/SocialSecurity/>)
- Heritage Foundation (<http://www.heritage.org/>)
- Heritage Foundation on Social Security (<http://www.heritage.org/Research/SocialSecurity/wm667.cfm>)
- The National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare (<http://www.ncpssm.org/>) acts to protect, preserve, promote, and ensure the financial security, health, and the well being of current and future generations of maturing Americans through advocacy, education, services, and grassroots efforts.
- Urban Institute: Income and Benefits Policy Center (<http://www.urban.org/center/ibp/index.cfm>)
- Urban Institute Retirement Project (<http://www.urban.org/toolkit/issues/retirementproject/index.cfm>)

VII. Demographics of Social Security

- Institute For Women's Policy Research (http://womenandsocialsecurity.com/Women_Social_Security/)
- NAACP (<http://www.naACP.org/news/2005/2005-02-20.html>)
- National Council of La Raza (<http://www.nclr.org/content/policy/detail/2441>)

Teaching materials can also be found on the following web sites:

- National Academy of Social Insurance (<http://www.nasi.org>)
- Concerned Scientists in Aging and Students for Social Security (<http://www.concernedscientistsinaging.org/>)
- Social Security for Youth (<http://www.socialsecurity4youth.org>), sponsored by Generations United (<http://www.gu.org>)
- A law course by Peter W. Martin of the Legal Information Institute at Cornell (<http://www.law.cornell.edu/socsec/course>)
- A “learning center” guide from InvestorGuide.com (<http://www.investorguide.com/igup1-social-security.htm>)

Other Web Sites for Social Security:

Most People Don't Know the Social Security Retirement Age Is Rising

http://www.bc.edu/centers/crr/special_pubs/So.pdf

Peter Orszag, author *How to Save Social Security*, available at:
http://uc.princeton.edu/main/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2&Itemid=7

Misinformation. For an authoritative discussion of "Myths and Misinformation about Social Security" propagated on the Internet visit:
<http://www.ssa.gov/history/InternetMyths.html>

Age of Eligibility. "Should We Raise Social Security's Earliest Eligibility Age?" by Alicia H. Munnell, Kevin B. Meme, Natalia A. Jivan, and Kevin E. Cahill, is a report just issued by the Boston College Center for Retirement Research in its "Issues in Brief" series (June, 2004). The topic is relevant both to how we think about the future of retirement and to financing of Social Security. To read the report, visit:
http://www.bc.edu/centers/crr/ib_18.shtml

Social Security Game. Want to get your students to think creatively about solving Social Security's financial problems? Let them play "The Social Security Game" developed by the American Society of Actuaries and available on their website:
<http://www.actuary.org/socsec/index.asp>

Progressivity. A paper from the National Bureau of Economic Research questions whether Social Security is really progressive after all: see Julia Lynn Coronado, Don Fullerton and Thomas Glass on "Progressivity of Social Security" available at:
<http://www.nber.org/papers/w7520>

Economic Growth. "Can Faster Growth Save Social Security?" by Rudolph G. Penner of the Urban Institute. To read the publication online visit:
http://www.bc.edu/centers/crr/issues/ib_15.pdf

Collective Investment. "Whose Money is it Anyway? Governance and Social Investment in Collective Investment Funds," available at:
http://www.bc.edu/centers/crr/wp_2003-07.shtml

Pension Reform. "The Politics of Public Pension Reform," available at:
http://www.bc.edu/centers/crr/wp_2003-06.shtml

Trust Fund. See the provocative paper "Is the Social Security Trust Fund Worth Anything?" by Ken Smetters. The author argues that a big part of the problem is that the public misunderstands what "surplus" and "off-budget" accounting items really mean. In other words, ignorance reigns supreme. Get the whole story at: <http://papers.nber.org/papers/W9845>

To combat ignorance, consult the General Accounting Office's most recent report "Social Security Reform: Analysis of a Trust Fund Exhaustion Scenario Illustrates the Difficult

Choices and the Need for Early Action" to read a balanced appraisal of the trade-offs ahead:

<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d031038t.pdf>

NASI. The National Academy of Social Insurance is a crucial resource for anyone interested in Social Security issues:

<http://www.nasi.org/>

See for example the following brief on its website:

"Social Security Finances: Findings of the 2002 Trustees Report"

http://www.nasi.org/publications2763/publications_show.htm?doc_id=106205

National Center for Policy Analysis. The National Center for Policy Analysis advocates private sector solutions to problems in the Social Security system:

<http://www.teamncpa.org/main/index.php>

Cato. The Cato Institute is a leading organization advocating privatization of Social Security, through its "Project on Social Security Choice":

<http://www.socialsecurity.org/>

The Social Security Reform Center warns about the danger of keeping Social Security in its present form: <http://www.socialsecurityreform.org/index.cfm>

The Economic Policy Institute is a liberal group advocating that Social Security should remain a public program: http://www.epi.org/content.cfm/issueguide_socialsecurity

Social Security Online, maintained by the U.S. Social Security Administration, is the key site to go to for information about the program: <http://www.ssa.gov/>