

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2025

Remarks on Signing the Social Security Fairness Act of 2023

January 5, 2025

The President. Thank you, thank you. Thank you very much, Bette. Thank you.

I know in about 20 years, I'll become a senior. [*Laughter*] It's hell turning 40, you know?
[*Laughter*]

God bless you all.

Bette, thanks for that introduction and for all the work you've done for retired Americans. It makes a gigantic difference. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

And by the way, if you excuse what they in the Senate—they used to say in the Senate, "a point of personal privilege." She gave me a handwritten poem from her husband who wrote to me, saying I look like I'm 20. [*Laughter*] So thank him very well. I'll give him a call. Thank you.

And thank you to the current and former Members of Congress for being here today, particularly Susan Collins. Susan, I hope it doesn't hurt your reputation, my complimenting you. [*Laughter*] Sherrod Brown. Get up, Sherrod. Stand. And Abigail Spanberger. Where's Abigail? Get up, Abigail.

I also want to thank Leader Schumer and Representative Garret Graves. Schumer is not here, is he?

Audience member. No.

The President. All right. And Garret couldn't make it today either.

But all of you have kept this bipartisan bill on track from the beginning to end. And so did our great labor leaders here today. I want to thank them.

You know, my dad taught me—and I mean this—my friends are tired of hearing me saying this: "A job is a lot more than a paycheck. It's about your dignity. It's about respect. It's about your place in the community. It's about being able to look your kid in the eye and say, 'Honey, it's going to be okay,'"—and know there's a real prospect that that's going to happen.

The bill I'm signing today is about a simple proposition. Americans who have worked hard all their lives to earn an honest living should be able to retire with economic security and dignity. That's the entire purpose of the Social Security system crafted by Franklin Delano Roosevelt nearly 90 years ago.

Social Security is the bedrock of financial security for retirees and survivors and for millions of Americans with disabilities. But we've all heard the stories like the one that Bette shared today. Public-sector employees, teachers, nurses, maintenance workers, and more—many working second jobs beyond their public service, often just because they need it to make ends meet.

The law that existed denied millions of Americans access to the full Social Security benefits they earned by thousands of dollars a year. That denial of benefits also applied to surviving spouses of public-service employees. Benefits cut that cost them security and a little bit of dignity as well.

Joining us today, Eliseo, a 17-year-old from Texas. Where is Eliseo?

Audience member. He's right here.

The President. Come here.

Eliseo—Eliseo is just around the corner from receiving Social Security. *[Laughter]*

This guy walked 1,600 miles from Washington—from here to—from Texas to Washington, DC, to support this bill. And he did it—he did it for his grandmother, a retired teacher who struggled to survive without the Social Security benefits she earned, and he thought it wasn't right.

But guess what? Tomorrow is his birthday. We have a tradition in our household. We've got to sing "Happy Birthday." You ready?

[At this point, the President led the audience in singing "Happy Birthday" to Lubbock, TX, resident Eliseo Jimenez.]

All right. Eliseo, I and others here have one request.

Mr. Jimenez. Yes.

The President. When you're President—*[laughter]*—and they say, "Joe Biden is in the outer office," promise me you won't say, "Joe who?" *[Laughter]*

Thank you, pal. You did a good job; your mom—grandmom would be proud.

Mr. Jimenez. Thank you. Thank you.

The President. Thank you. Go ahead.

Look, by signing this bill we're extending Social Security benefits for millions of teachers, nurses, and other public and—employees and their spouses and survivors. That means an estimated average of \$360 per month increase. That's a big deal in middle class households like the one I grew up in and many of you did—and million—for millions of Americans going forward.

That's not all. Over 2½ million Americans are going to receive a lump-sum payment of thousands of dollars to make up for the shortfall in the benefits they should have gotten in 2024. It's going to be a big deal.

They're going to begin receiving these payments this year. And this is a big deal. Someone once said, "This is a big deal." It's a big deal. *[Laughter]*

As—*[laughter]*—as the first President in more than 20 years to expand Social Security benefits, this victory is the culmination of a 48—a 4-year—excuse me, 4-year [40-year; White House correction] fight to provide security for workers who dedicated their lives to their communities. And I'm proud—I'm proud to have played a small part in this fight and get to sign it.

And thanks to Sherrod Brown and Richie Neal—Richie—and other advocates in this room, one of the first things we did was to protect pensions for as many as 2 million union workers and retirees when we signed the Butch Lewis Act. It's the most significant action to protect union pensions in 50 years. And the Butch Lewis Act helped them in—helped them retire with dignity.

Look, just like the Social Security Fairness Act, when I'm sign—about to sign—what I'm signing today—when I came to office, I promised I'd always protect Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. I never thought anybody would have to make that promise to protect it, but we had to make that promise. We still do.

I said repeatedly that if anyone tried to cut these programs, I'd stop them. And that's the promise we've kept, even in the face of proposals to cut and weaken these programs that millions of Americans count on.

I know there's a lot more work to do, by the way, to improve and expand benefits, including those who most are in need, to protect Social Security for the long term, and finally asking the wealthiest Americans to begin to pay their fair share so it's able to be maintained, and so much more.

Folks, we could not have done this alone. To the people in this room and the people around the country who did the work, who kept the faith, thank you, thank you, thank you.

Our economy today is the strongest economy in the world. We've got more to do, but it's the strongest economy in the world because we have the best workers in the world. We have the best workers in the—[*applause*—we do.

And I might add, parenthetically, when I asked the—I went to South Korea to get the communications—excuse—to get Samsung to send back the chipmakers to the United States. We invented the damn things. [*Laughter*] We used to have 40 percent of the market.

And he said, "Yes." And I finally said—I said, "Why?" This is the God's truth. The foreign leader of a major corporation said, "Because you have the best, most qualified workers in the world—union worker"—no, I'm serious—"and because it's the safest place in the world to invest."

Look, let me close with this. Today is a victory for the dignity of work and the dignity of workers, everyday people who build the middle class, who built this country. We must never forget it. We can't forget who did it.

We just have to remember who we are. For God's sake, we're the United States of America. The United States—there's nothing beyond our capacity if we set our mind to it and we do it together.

So God bless you all. May God protect our troops. And now let's sign this bill.

[*The President greeted participants at the signing desk.*]

The President. All right. Who—we've got spots up here. Come on.

Senator Susan M. Collins. We do. This is so exciting.

Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra. Well done, Mr. President.

The President. Well, thank you.

Everybody knows that I like her so much, I'd hurt her reputation. [*Laughter*]

Okay. You ready? Get set. Go. [*Laughter*]

[*The President signed the bill.*]

All right.

Secretary Becerra. Bette. Bette.

[*The President handed a pen to Elizabeth "Bette" Marafino, president of the Connecticut Alliance for Retired Americans.*]

The President. Here you go, Bette. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

All right. I know it's going to be a long time for any of you to collect Social Security, like me, but it's—let's get going. [*Laughter*]

Thank you, thank you, thank you, everybody. This is a good day.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:31 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Sen. Sherrod C. Brown; former Reps. Abigail D. Spanberger and Garret N. Graves; Adriana Martinez, grandmother of Mr. Jimenez; Rep. Richard E. Neal; and Lee Jae-yong, vice chairman, Samsung Electronics Co., Ltd. H.R. 82, approved January 5, was assigned Public Law No. 118–273. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 7.

Categories: Bill Signings and Vetoes : Social Security Fairness Act of 2023, signing remarks.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Becerra, Xavier; Brown, Sherrod C.; Collins, Susan M.; Graves, Garret N.; Jimenez, Eliseo; Lee Jae-yong; Marafino Elizebeth "Bette"; Martinez, Adriana; Neal, Richard E.; Schumer, Charles E.; Spanberger, Abigail D.

Subjects: Economic improvement; Household income and wages; Labor movement and organized labor; Legislation, enacted: Social Security Fairness Act of 2023; Medicare and Medicaid programs; Pensions and retirement accounts, strengthening efforts; Secretary of Health and Human Services; Semiconductor manufacturing; Senate minority leader; Social Security program.

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