

also in a position where they are not burdened with the debt that prevents them from carrying on a life, to get married, to purchase a first home, to buy a new automobile, all the things that help our economy grow, all the reasons that they went to college in the first place.

So I commend the two gentlemen for their continuous work in this area, your support of the Democratic budget. What a great job that CHRIS VAN HOLLEN did today articulating the values that this side of the aisle has been putting forward not only in terms of the morality of the issue, but also the economic impact that it has on so many working families.

I hope that our distinguished colleagues from California and Pennsylvania will join us in the second hour in a discussion on all generations on Social Security.

Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania. I was just going to say how happy I am to welcome Mr. LARSON as the newest member to the Future Caucus. There aren't many of us that have such wonderful white hair in the future caucus.

But what is interesting is this is an exact linkage to the subject that we are going to talk about next with respect to Social Security. And that is, it is all part of the same system. The idea that you give opportunity to people, you demand responsibility, they pay into a system, they benefit at some point, and then the next generation benefits.

People on Social Security today are able to benefit because of the workers of today. Thirty, 40 years from now, those students who are worrying about student loans will probably still be in the workforce and making, hopefully, more money that will pay into Social Security that will help the workers of today, who will be the retirees of tomorrow. So this is all actually linked and part of making America work.

So I am proud to be with the two gentlemen.

Mr. SWALWELL of California. Thank you. I don't think we could end on a more inspirational note than the eloquent words from our former chairman from Connecticut, Mr. LARSON.

This is about the future. I am proud to be a sponsor of the Social Security Fairness Act. I am glad that is getting some attention this evening.

To summarize, the Future Forum and what we aspire for young people to have is not a handout when it comes to student loan debt, not a complete free pass where you just take on government investments and you don't give anything back.

What we are saying is that if you are qualified and you worked hard and you have the student loan debt, it should be easier than it is today. We should be able to pass JOE COURTNEY's bill and allow you to refinance. We should find every way possible to reduce this debt for each person as low as we can.

And if you are a student today, the government should not make money on

your student interest loan. They shouldn't make money. If you are qualified and able to go to college, especially if you are like the gentleman from Pennsylvania or myself and you are the first person in your family to go to college, we should reduce every barrier to college because it is a part of achieving that American Dream of starting a family, owning a home, buying a new automobile, and saving for a secure golden retirement.

So I thank the gentleman from Connecticut for his help this evening and coming down as a special cameo guest appearance. And I also thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania for, again, being a part of our Future Forum.

You can tweet us at #futureforum and we will continue this conversation until we address what is the greatest moral crisis of our generation—student loan debt.

I yield back the balance of my time.

SOCIAL SECURITY 2100 ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON) for 30 minutes.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to be here this evening to talk about and to follow two distinguished colleagues from California and Pennsylvania who spoke with great eloquence about the future, who were addressing the issue of student loans and student loan debt that we are experiencing all across the country.

This evening, I am here to discuss Social Security. Currently, before the Ways and Means Committee, we are addressing the issue of Social Security that, as everybody knows, not only covers old age and survivorship, but also disability.

That fund is due to expire in 2016 if Congress does not take action, due to be cut severely and have an impact on so many Americans. And yet all across this country, frankly, on a bipartisan basis on the committee and from without the committee, people are talking about coming up with solutions for Social Security.

That is why we have introduced the Social Security 2100 Act. Why 2100? Well, because we want to make sure that the program of Social Security, which by law is required to make sure that it is solvent for 75 years, in fact, is, and that is what our proposal does.

But I want to talk about this in terms of a pragmatic, practical, commonsense path forward to make sure that Social Security is not only there for seniors who are currently receiving it, but for future generations, as well.

Social Security is uniquely the most indispensable plan that the government has been committed to.

We have a slide that I would like to put up that demonstrates exactly how indispensable Social Security is.

Today, two-thirds of seniors rely on Social Security for the majority of

their income. Think about that for a moment. Of all the people that you know, of all the retirees that you are associated with, two-thirds of them rely on Social Security for a majority of their income.

The median retirement account balance for all Americans—all Americans—is \$2,500. Ask yourself, America: Is there anyone that could sustain themselves or a family or a spouse with \$2,500 in their retirement accounts and savings?

Only 14 percent of private sector workers are participating in defined benefit pensions. Well, what does that mean? That means that 86 percent of Americans are not. So what we are faced with in the United States Congress really isn't a Social Security problem, because we all know that Social Security works. Social Security has never missed a payment, and Social Security is there to both help people who are disabled, to help the spouse and the children who are survivors after an untimely death, and it is there in retirement and serves as a pension, as I said before, almost exclusively, for two-thirds of all of America.

So simply stated, it makes no sense at all to cut Social Security. It makes no sense at all to raise the age of Social Security.

Since 2008 and the Great Recession and the devastation that so many Americans went through, people who had worked hard and played by the rules and had invested their money in 401Ks, well, the reality is that they saw their 401K become a 101K. So it is long overdue for Congress to come together in a nonpartisan way to fully address this issue.

□ 2015

At the start of this session, our colleagues on the other side of the aisle developed a rule. I commend them for this rule. The rule says that you can't just address, simply, disability with respect to the Social Security trust fund.

You have to address both disability and old age and survivors' benefits collectively. That is the way the program has always been addressed, and I commend them for underscoring what is a retirement crisis and why we need to take these bold steps.

I say "retirement crisis" because you saw the statistic before where only 14 percent of the private sector workers are participating in defined benefit contributions. That simply cannot sustain us. What this particular chart shows is that more seniors than ever are also paying taxes on their Social Security benefits. So we have this retirement crisis in which two-thirds of Americans are retiring with just about Social Security as their only means of moving forward, their only means of sustaining themselves.

To further compound that problem, the way the Social Security Act was changed in 1983 has now found us in a situation in which taxable income over \$25,000 for a single person is subject to

being taxed and \$32,000 for a married couple. This is only escalating as more and more baby boomers retire into the system.

For example, in 1998—that was not that long ago—26 percent of all seniors came under this law and were taxed under the current law. Just last year, in 2014, that figure rose to 49 percent, and it is only growing.

We need to address this issue. Why? Because more seniors, out of necessity, are finding themselves working—working to make up for the loss that they incurred from 2008 forward in their 401(k)'s and in their investment portfolios, working to make ends meet.

One thing seniors understand and, I think, America understands is this: Social Security is not an entitlement. Certainly, you are entitled to Social Security payments; but why? You are entitled to them because they are the insurance that you paid for.

It is the earned compensation that people, through their hard work and sweat of their brow, have put into the system. The system is called FICA, the Federal Insurance Contributions Act. Those contributions have been made by all Americans, and as I said earlier, they remain the bulk work for the Nation's retirement program and are the safety net that prevents seniors from retiring into poverty, that allows them to exist.

This is the time to focus on strengthening the Social Security Program. This is the time we should be talking about expanding the Social Security Program. It is because of the retirement crisis that we find ourselves here, not for lack of contribution, not for lack of effort, but because of the real economic conditions most families have found themselves in. That is why we introduced the Social Security 2100 Act.

What does it do? First and foremost, it doesn't raise the national debt at all. It is completely paid for. How do we know this? Because we have an actuarial report.

The chief actuary for Social Security has determined that it exceeds the 75-year limits in terms of its solvency so that Social Security will not only be here now, tomorrow, and well into the future, but Justin Bieber will be 106 years old, and Social Security will still be there for him and for those of his generation as well.

It is that important and vital a program for our Nation so that it needs our very specific and direct focus and attention.

With so many relying on Social Security, we also need to expand its benefits. We are proposing a modest 2 percent increase across the board, but we are also proposing what senior citizens know already, which is that the system that we have of calculating the COLA is inadequate and does not work.

Most importantly, it doesn't reflect what seniors actually pay, what they actually have to go through in terms of the costs of heating their homes, of

buying prescription drugs, and of paying for the escalating costs of food and heat and energy.

We have devised a system—endorsed widely by groups that embrace it—that we call the CPIE, the consumer price index based on the actual costs of the elderly, with the E standing for elderly in this circumstance. It makes sure that there are sufficient amounts of money that are there to provide for our senior citizens.

The next thing that we do is to make sure that nobody can retire into poverty. We raise the minimum benefit to 125 percent of poverty, which would amount to—in so many cases, at the lower end of the economic scale—a 50 percent increase in benefits for the poorest amongst us.

When I say “poor,” I mean the working poor, people who are pulled into the system. Again, this is not an entitlement. This is earned compensation. This is the insurance that so many have already paid for and why this has become so important and so vital a test.

We also provide a tax cut for 11 million working seniors. Let me repeat that. We provide a tax cut for 11 million seniors.

How do we do that? As we said earlier, people, out of necessity, have found themselves in this system. They have found themselves in a position in which, in retirement, they are finding themselves working. They work hard for their money, but as I said earlier, if they are single and if their combined incomes are more than \$25,000, they are taxed. If they are a couple and their combined incomes are \$32,000, they are taxed.

These numbers are easily reached and are being exceeded, and that is why we are recommending the tax cut by raising those limits and by providing those to working seniors, and there is a value that they bring to all of our communities with the break that they need so that they can sustain themselves and can also continue to pay their way in retirement with the benefits that they have earned, with the benefits that they have paid for but that haven't kept pace with the economic times.

It provides an across-the-board benefit increase of 2 percent for every senior, and it improves the cost-of-living adjustments by going to CPIE. As I said before, a new minimum benefit to ensure that no one who has paid into the system retires into poverty is flat out fair.

You may ask: How do you pay for this? Certainly, at the outset of this, we made the boast that this is solvent into the next century, beyond the 75 years that is required, signed off by the Social Security chief actuary, who has determined the solvency of the program.

How do we do this? First and foremost, we say that we ought to increase the contribution to the fund by 1 percent. Now, 1 percent may not seem like

a lot; but, when you have the whole country contributing, in fact, it is. Even at that 1 percent level, though, we believe that, especially in dealing with the times in which we are today, we ought to phase that in over a 25-year period.

What does that mean? What that means is that, for a worker who is making \$50,000 a year, for 50 cents a week, as part of his or her contribution, they get the most valuable governmental program in the history of this Nation, the program that keeps people out of poverty, the program that for more than two-thirds of them is the only retirement vehicle that they will have, the program that is also there in disability and for survivors' benefits.

We have so many Members in this body who can tell their stories about how they would not have made it without Social Security. Both the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, PAUL RYAN, and probably one of the foremost authorities on the issue, RICHARD NEAL of Massachusetts, benefited from Social Security. It made it possible for their mothers to help them and their families into college and beyond, and look how successful both of them have been.

This is America's story. This is about America coming together, and that is why it is around modest, pragmatic, straightforward proposals that don't shy away from the cost but address it head on, that address it head on in a simple, pragmatic, commonsense manner.

These aren't taxes. These are contributions that people are making and that they are receiving a direct benefit from. It is unique amongst all of the programs that we have.

Along with the 1 percent increase phased in over 25 years, which amounts to .05 percent, or 50 cents a week for someone earning \$50,000 or more—less if you are earning less and a little bit more if you are earning more—we are also asking the top .4 percent to pay the same rate as everyone else.

As you may know, Social Security is taxed currently only up to \$118,000. After that, people stop paying into the system. What we are saying is: listen, the country is going through some difficult times.

People, especially those who work hard and play by the rules—the working class, the middle class, who are suffering under this—we ought to give them a little bit of a break.

Not until \$400,000 do we start taxing Social Security again—excuse me—asking those who are paying into the system to pay the same rate as everybody else at that level. Only .4 percent, we ask to pay to make this fund solvent, in conjunction with raising the percentage by 1 percent, for the next 75 years and beyond.

□ 2030

We keep Social Security strong for generations to come, and that is why

this is such a vital and important benefit for this great Nation of ours.

At the end of the day, what has made our country great, going back to those first settlers who all gathered together to help one another raise their homes and their barns and plow and sow and reap the benefits of their fields, Americans have rallied to come together, rallied with one another from the time the Thirteen Colonies formed the Union to today of our 50 States. Our States are unique, our States all have special qualities, but the one quality that we all share is that we are Americans.

Social Security is America's program. It is what Roosevelt recognized, as did the Congresses back then, the importance of dealing in our system of entrepreneurialism and capitalism and risk taking, that that gives us an unbelievable strength in a global and world economy, but it has to be balanced off with the value and the notion that if you work hard and play by the rules that your Nation is there for you as well, and that you can't retire into poverty after working all your life, that some calamity or misfortune, a disability, a tragic death can't ruin you or your family because it is part of a larger family, the United States of America.

God bless you. God bless America. Thank you for listening to this presentation.

We have 56 original cosponsors of this bill, and we know all across this country, the more that we talk about this straightforward, commonsense, practical solution to Social Security, Americans are going to require that Congress steps up to the plate and meets its responsibility and obligation to make sure that no senior, no individual can retire into poverty, and the system that has worked so extraordinarily well for every American is there not only today and tomorrow, but well into the future without raising the national debt and only calling upon Americans to do what they have done traditionally: contribute to a program that guarantees a secure retirement and pension and benefits that they will reap throughout a lifetime.

I yield back the balance of my time.

SENATE ENROLLED JOINT RESOLUTION SIGNED

The Speaker announced his signature to an enrolled joint resolution of the Senate of the following title:

S.J. Res. 8. Joint Resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the National Labor Relations Board relating to representation case procedures.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. PAYNE (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of foot surgery.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 34 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, March 26, 2015, at 9 a.m.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XIII, reports of committees were delivered to the Clerk for printing and reference to the proper calendar, as follows:

Mr. BURGESS: Committee on Rules. House Resolution 173. Resolution providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2) to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to repeal the Medicare sustainable growth rate and strengthen Medicare access by improving physician payments and making other improvements, to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program, and for other purposes, and providing for proceedings during the period from March 27, 2015, through April 10, 2015 (Rept. 114-50). Referred to the House Calendar.

PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XII, public bills and resolutions of the following titles were introduced and severally referred, as follows:

By Mr. THORNBERRY (for himself and Mr. SMITH of Washington):

H.R. 1597. A bill to reform the acquisition system of the Department of Defense, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services, and in addition to the Committees on Small Business, Science, Space, and Technology, and Oversight and Government Reform, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Ms. TITUS (for herself, Mr. COFFMAN, Mr. CURBELO of Florida, Mr. HANNA, Mr. JOLLY, Ms. ROSLEHTINEN, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. O'ROURKE, Mr. SMITH of Washington, Mr. TAKANO, Mr. WALZ, Ms. BROWNLEY of California, Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts, Mr. CONNOLLY, Mr. DEUTCH, Ms. FRANKEL of Florida, Mr. LOWENTHAL, Ms. PINGREE, Mr. GRIJALVA, and Mr. RUSH):

H.R. 1598. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to amend the definition of the term "spouse" to recognize new State definitions of such term for the purpose of the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. POMPEO (for himself, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. ASHFORD, Mrs. KIRKPATRICK, Ms. ADAMS, Ms. PLASKETT, Mr. HASTINGS, Mr. SCHRADER, Mr. WHITFIELD, Mrs. ELLMERS of North Carolina, Mr. COLLINS of New York, Mrs. WAGNER, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. VALADAO, Mr. NEWHOUSE, Mr. NUNES, and Mr. BLUM):

H.R. 1599. A bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act with respect to food produced from, containing, or consisting of a bioengineered organism, the labeling of natural foods, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Com-

merce, and in addition to the Committee on Agriculture, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. MCKINLEY (for himself, Mrs. CAPPS, Mr. HECK of Nevada, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Mr. HARPER, Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. YOUNG of Alaska, Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico, Mr. FITZPATRICK, Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, Ms. ESHOO, Mr. CARTWRIGHT, Mr. HIGGINS, Mr. TONKO, Mr. RYAN of Ohio, Ms. PINGREE, Ms. TSONGAS, Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts, Ms. TITUS, Mr. SCHIFF, Ms. BROWNLEY of California, Ms. GABBARD, Mr. KEATING, Mr. ISRAEL, Ms. NORTON, Mr. CARSON of Indiana, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Mr. DEFALZIO, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. GARAMENDI, Mr. HASTINGS, Mr. PETERS, Mr. SLAUGHTER, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. NOLAN, Mr. QUIGLEY, Mr. JOLLY, Mr. FARR, Mrs. DAVIS of California, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. LANGEVIN, Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York, Mr. LOEBACK, Mr. PAYNE, Mr. NADLER, Mr. COHEN, Mr. BEYER, Mr. DOGGETT, and Mr. RANGEL):

H.R. 1600. A bill to amend title XXVII of the Public Health Service Act to limit copayment, coinsurance, or other cost-sharing requirements applicable to prescription drugs in a specialty drug tier to the dollar amount (or its equivalent) of such requirements applicable to prescription drugs in a non-preferred brand drug tier, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. LUCAS (for himself and Mr. HECK of Washington):

H.R. 1601. A bill to clarify membership requirements for the Board of Directors of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Ms. SCHAKOWSKY:

H.R. 1602. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to establish direct care registered nurse-to-patient staffing ratio requirements in hospitals, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. BARR (for himself, Mr. JONES, Mr. BOUSTANY, Mr. PEARCE, Mr. COFFMAN, Mr. GUTHRIE, Mr. LANCE, Mr. GIBSON, Mrs. BROOKS of Indiana, Ms. GABBARD, Ms. SINEMA, and Mr. CURBELO of Florida):

H.R. 1603. A bill to amend the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 to improve the private treatment of veterans who are victims of military sexual assault; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. MACARTHUR (for himself and Mr. O'ROURKE):

H.R. 1604. A bill to amend the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 to expand the eligibility of veterans to receive mental health care at non-Department of Veterans Affairs facilities; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. AMASH:

H.R. 1605. A bill to abolish the Export-Import Bank of the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mr. EMMER of Minnesota:

H.R. 1606. A bill to direct the Secretary of Transportation to establish a national intersection and interchange safety construction