



Restoring the Trust for Americans at or Near Retirement

Testimony before the House Budget Committee

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Thank you Chairman Price, Ranking Member Van Hollen, and members of the Committee for inviting me to testify on the subject of Social Security and Medicare. I am honored to testify before you and am humbled to speak on behalf of the 1.3 million members of the Association of Mature American Citizens (AMAC). Before I begin my testimony, I would like to thank the entire committee and the staff on both sides of the aisle for the work that has been done on behalf of seniors nationwide. I, like millions of my fellow seniors, am worried about the looming insolvency of Social Security and Medicare. Will my benefits be cut? Will my benefits be enough for me to live off? Will I have access to the medical care I need? Will Social Security survive for my children and grandchildren?

While there are years of work ahead to solve these problems and to ensure the solvency of these two vital programs for generations to come, a conversation like the one we're having today is the first step to restore seniors' trust in their government. It truly is time to *Restore the Trust* by saving these social programs, as well as restore the nations' trust in its elected leaders. Thank you for inviting me to be a part of this critical conversation.

Rather than spending time reviewing the various statistics which you are all-too-familiar with, let me summarize by saying Social Security and Medicare are in financial trouble. As more and more aging Americans retire than ever before, the OASDI Trust funds are being put under strain they are unprepared to adequately deal with. By itself, the ever-increasing out-payments and diminished inflow of revenue to the OASDI will lead to the financial instability of millions of seniors nationwide—creating a culture of poverty within our senior communities. It is unacceptable to have such negative prospects in the greatest, wealthiest country in the world.

Seniors are both aware and concerned about the state of Social Security and Medicare. In fact, I recently posted a poll on the AMAC website. The question read, "With the current state of the Social Security program, do you agree that Social Security will continue to exist long enough to pay your full benefits and your children's full benefits?" 90% of the over 5,000 respondents said they were either unsure, or completely disagreed—Social Security was not going to survive.

Every day, millions of aging Americans realize the sad reality that they cannot afford to retire. I know this better than most people as my background and livelihood was based in insurance and pension planning. I sat across the table from dozens of couples who came to me, ready to retire—only to find out they wouldn't survive financially if they did. In fact, several of my own employees at AMAC are seniors who need to earn a supplementary income to their Social Security benefit and other retirement revenue. More seniors are entering the workforce in their retirement years because they simply cannot afford to live off what they have.

Unfortunately, things will only continue to get worse. Today, the typical young person is competing against seniors in the workforce, and will find it more difficult to retire than any generation before them. The Social Contract of the young caring for the old through the Social Security program has turned itself into a generational gap and competition that leaves America weaker and less unified than ever before. This is unacceptable.

While AMAC largely focuses on Social Security and retirement, we have also been heavily involved in Medicare and the reduction of health care costs. As a benefit-providing organization,

I constantly hear from my members about increased Medicare costs and the confusing nature of the Medicare program. My members are keenly aware of the fact that every year they pay more out-of-pocket for the same benefits they've always had.

Granted, medical treatments are expensive. The more we advance medical technology, the more expensive our treatments become. Testing systems like MRIs have become vital to ensuring patient health. However, without catastrophic coverage in Medicare, many seniors are unable to cover the tests they desperately need, and what's more, is the needlessly complicated nature of the Medicare program leaving many seniors confused and unsure of the extent of their Medicare benefits.

The process of enrolling in Medicare is overly confusing and cumbersome. Personally, I know several people who have been penalized both monetarily and in coverage due to their inability to navigate the complicated Medicare system. Paying penalties and denying benefits to seniors when they have paid their whole lives into the Medicare program is unacceptable. Medicare needs to be less complicated for the everyday American to comprehend and use.

So what can we do? What am I, a concerned and affected senior, to do? We meet with our Congressmen, we testify before Congress, and we activate the silent millions who want to see a change for the better in this country. But, like all great things accomplished in America's short but powerful history, solving these problems will require teamwork, bipartisanship, and a desire to do what's right. We need real solutions.

I speak on behalf of the 1.3 million members in my organization when I say we want Congress to succeed. We want you to fix these problems, and AMAC has come up with fresh, bold, and new ideas to assist in any way we can. It is my hope that my testimony leaves a personal impression on each and every one of you, that Social Security is more than numbers, facts, and figures—it's people. People like me. And People like you.

I appreciate the opportunity to be here today, and look forward to receiving your questions.