

December 6, 2012

Dear Speaker Boehner:

We are writing to inform you that we will oppose including Social Security cuts for future or current beneficiaries in any deficit reduction package.

Under long-standing federal law, Social Security is not part of the federal budget and cannot contribute to the federal deficit. This reflects Social Security's structure as an independent, self-financed insurance program, in which worker contributions, not general taxes, finance benefits. In our view, it is essential that Social Security's status as a separate entity be fully maintained.

Contrary to some claims, Social Security is not the cause of our nation's deficit problem. Not only does the program operate independently, but it is prohibited from borrowing. Social Security must pay all benefits from its own trust fund. If there are insufficient funds to pay out full benefits, benefits are automatically reduced to the level supported by the program's own revenues. Social Security cannot drive up the deficit by tapping general revenues to pay benefits. Additionally, it is important to note that over its lifetime, Social Security has collected and earned \$15.5 trillion and only paid out \$12.9 trillion in benefits.

Even though Social Security operates in a fiscally responsible manner, some still advocate deep benefit cuts and seem convinced that Social Security hands out lavish welfare checks. But Social Security is not welfare. Seniors earned their benefits by working hard and paying into the system. Meanwhile, the average monthly Social Security benefit for seniors is only about \$1,200, quite low by international standards.

For all these reasons, we believe it would be a serious mistake to cut Social Security benefits for current or future beneficiaries as part of a deficit reduction package. To be sure, Social Security has its own long-term challenges that will need to be addressed in the decades ahead. But the budget and Social Security are separate and should be considered separately.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

Keith Ellison
Member of Congress

Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress

John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress

Joe Courtney
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

Gary L. Ackerman
Member of Congress

André Carson
Member of Congress

Joe Baca
Member of Congress

Kathy Castor
Member of Congress

Shelley Berkley
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Judy Chu
Member of Congress

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
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David N. Cicilline
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Earl Blumenauer
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Robert A. Brady
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Yvette D. Clarke
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Anna G. Eshoo
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Elijah E. Cummings
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Donna F. Edwards
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Alcee L. Hastings
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Rubén Hinojosa
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Barbara Lee
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Rush Holt
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John Lewis
Member of Congress

Michael M. Honda
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David Loebsack
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Sheila Jackson Lee
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Zoe Lofgren
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Henry C. "Hank" Johnson
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Edolphus Towns
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Maxine Waters
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