

Subcommittee on Social Security within Committee on Ways and Means
Hearing – *Save our Social Security Now*
Testimony of Congressman Donald S. Beyer Jr.
September 24, 2020

Chair Larson and Ranking Member Reed, thank you so much for having this hearing and allowing me to offer witness testimony today. I have the privilege of representing Northern Virginia, which is home to the highest concentration of federal workers in the country as well as the Pentagon and other major military installations.

President Trump's tax deferral, which is mandatory for federal employees and military service members, has put many of my constituents in a difficult position. In the short term they will see more money in their paychecks, at a time when need is keenly felt, and many will be tempted to spend it. But under current law they will have to repay that money through double taxation, beginning in January.

Soldiers and federal workers have written to me to say the guidance they have been provided by their branches or agencies has been confusing or misleading. One, an Army Captain, expressed concerns that many of those who serve under him may not realize or prepare for the significant cuts to their paychecks which President Trump has set them up to receive in January. Dozens of federal employees have expressed similar fears – and the simple fact is that President Trump does not have the legal authority to deliver the “permanent” deferral of these taxes.

Also, as my colleagues note, some of the ways President Trump has proposed making this policy permanent would have the added effect of depleting Social Security trust funds and leading to benefit cuts. This is not the real relief my constituents need and deserve, this is smoke and mirrors that could easily do more harm than good.

It isn't just that the President is disrespecting the civil service and the United States military as political pawns – by explicitly tying forgiveness of these deferred taxes to his re-election, President Trump is making it clear that the intent of the policy is fundamentally corrupt.

Congress should void this policy entirely, before President Trump can use it to do further harm to government workers and Social Security. As it explores the means of doing so, federal workers and military servicemembers should be allowed to opt out.

I would note, in closing, that one former retired general recently called this policy's effects on service members a “kick in the chops,” and current leaders have called the lack of an opt-out provision for soldiers “unfortunate.”

The business community and private sector objected strenuously to the payroll tax deferral as “unfair” and “unworkable,” and were allowed the option of not participating (which nearly all have chosen). Federal workers and members of the military deserve the same courtesy and respect from the federal government.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify today and represent the voices of our military service members and federal employees on how Trump's executive order impacts them.