



# Democratic Socialists of America

## Defending Social Security

George W. Bush's massive campaign to privatize social security must be turned back. His proposed new system would not provide "security" for its participants and would eliminate the "social" character from its structure. This right-wing attack on a cornerstone of New Deal legislation is not motivated by fiduciary concerns with an allegedly distressed federal program but by partisan politics and right-wing ideology. Gutting Social Security will be a giant step toward dismantling the entire structure of progressive U.S. government that was won over the past 100 years.

Even before the New Deal, measures to temper the dominance of corporate power were in play. Antitrust legislation, the progressive income tax, food safety regulations, protection and conservation of public lands were all valuable gains. We can be proud that even within corporate dominated U.S. capitalism, popular struggles have resulted in programs and institutions that work for the welfare and dignity of all people. The crowning achievement of these struggles, and the lynch pin of these institutions, is the Social Security System.

Those of us who know that government has a positive role to play in the well-being of the people have been dismayed at the wasting away of progressive government during the current conservative era. But the Bush assault on Social Security represents an all-out ideological assault on the very idea of a government operating for the public good. For this reason alone it is incumbent to draw the line and defend Social Security with all the resources and energy that we can muster.

Social Security represents a family pact between generations. It enables the parent to continue supporting the child even if the parent dies young; it helps the younger generation to share the burden of supporting their elderly parents. This pact must be honored.

We therefore resolve to make the defense of Social Security an integral part of our activities. We resolve to be part of the effort to educate the public about the success of the Social Security System, its still untapped potential as a model for other broad-based social welfare efforts, and the threat posed by the Bush privatization scheme. We will communicate with our allies and urge them to engage in educational activities, demonstrations, letter writing campaigns, and use all other feasible means to defend Social Security. In our activities we will be guided by the following basic principles:

- 1. Funding for the Social Security system is not in crisis.** Predictions of the finances of the system 40 years in the future are inherently uncertain. Under some assumptions for growth in the economy, demographic changes, etc. modest additional financing may be needed in the far future. Under other assumptions, the current financing arrangements are adequate into the indefinite future. Claims of an impending crisis or bankruptcy are either overstatements or lies made to generate public acceptance for dismantling a valuable and valued system.
- 2. The character of Social Security as a defined-benefit pension and insurance plan must not be changed.** It has provided generations of Americans with security in their old age, has made possible a productive life for countless people with disabilities, and provided income to survivors of prematurely deceased breadwinners.
- 3. Proposed changes in the financing of Social Security should lessen the unfair, regressive character of the existing payroll tax.** Such changes could include: increasing the wage cap; including unearned income in the tax; expanding coverage to sectors left out; and allowing greater flexibility in investing the Social Security trust fund to provide a higher rate of return.