

Robert People will fight to ensure Americans continue to receive their Social Security benefits.

Without Social Security, 2/3 of our elderly people would be living in poverty. The State of Florida has the second largest population of seniors in a state and the third largest percentage of seniors. Currently, Social Security reserves are projected to be depleted by 2033. This is a crisis that needs to be addressed immediately. 17.6% of District 15's population is 65 years of age or older and 13.7% are living with disability.

Policy Proposals

Social Security Retirement:

- Eliminate the social security income tax cap
- Monthly income above the 70th percentile adds to Social Security benefit at a 5% rate allowing lower income earners to keep their same income while adjusting higher earners payment benefits. Phased in for new enrollees.
- Any excess funds are reinvested in the Social Security Trust Fund and not used for general government spending
- Income loss relief for low-income dependents

Social Security Disability:

- Restore Federal Government employment levels to allow for timely case processing
- Partial disability payments to allow for workforce reintegration

Supplemental Security Income:

- Eliminate the marriage penalty
- Increase benefit amounts to federal poverty levels

Social Security Retirement Solvency:

Robert People will support and proposes the elimination of the Social Security Tax Cap on income. Right now, any income above 176,100 dollars is not subject to Social Security payroll taxes. 6% of earners make more than this. If we eliminate the tax cap, Social Security reserves would last

through 2065. But that's not enough, Robert People will fight to make sure the promise of social security is there for future generations. Enough of the discussions every few years about raising retirement ages or being told to basically give up on getting any of the funds back that Americans spent their life paying. In order to do that, he will propose an adjustment to how benefit amounts are determined for high-income earners who are far more likely to have had retirement savings options in their lifetime. By adding a bend point so that a lower percentage of historical monthly income above the 70th percentile is added to the social security benefit payment, the long-term social security balance could increase by 29% while keeping the lower income recipients with their same benefits amounts. This adjustment could be phased in for new enrollees. Additional steps toward sustainability could include tying benefit increases for future enrollees to price indexes instead of wages or phasing out cost of living adjustments for the wealthiest social security recipients who are less impacted by these expenses.

Until 2010, workers paid in more to the Social Security Trust Fund than was paid out to beneficiaries but the government did not save or invest the surplus they used the funds for other general government expenses and wrote IOUs to the trust fund. Now that those IOUs are being cashed in, the trust fund is adding to the deficit. Robert People would also support or propose prohibiting the federal government from using any excess funds to pay for other expenses, those funds need to be reinvested into the Social Security Trust Fund.

Once there is more stability within the system, Congress can and should address the debilitating impact of the loss of income to dependents when someone dies. When one member of a married couple dies, that income is lost. For seniors who are more economically disadvantaged this can mean loss of housing, an inability to afford household expenses, and/or food insecurity. Congress could explore either providing a larger death benefit payout to these individuals than the \$255 that Social Security currently provides or allow for a one-year continuance of income while surviving dependents explore their options for transitioning to fewer expenses.

Social Security Disability:

Currently, Social Security Disability applications can take an average of two years for approval and require multiple appeals. During this time, the applicant often has no income and depending on a state's Medicaid criteria, may have no insurance as well. If they don't have support from family or friends, this can leave them in worse health and living conditions by the time they get disability than when they started trying. Cuts to our federal government workforce have directly impacted our citizens seeking to get approved for benefits. Robert People would fight to restore these federal jobs so that Americans can get the support they need.

SSDI has incentives for people to return to work through allowing some income to be earned while receiving benefits (up to \$1550/month) and allowing unlimited income for a nine-month trial work period and a three-month grace period. Evidence shows, though, that few beneficiaries would ever be able to earn adequate incomes without SSDI and many can't reach the income cap. The job market is also especially difficult for individuals who require accommodations. If there were a disability supplement (partial payment) option, then it could encourage people with disabilities to rejoin the workforce without fear that if their health condition worsens in the future they will have to go back through the lengthy process to get disability approved or the fear that they will never be able to reliably sustain themselves through employment only. This would also allow someone with a variable condition (such as multiple sclerosis or autoimmune conditions) to work more when they are well and get more disability compensation when they have flare-ups. This means more freedom for people with disabilities, many of whom want to work but encounter barriers to economic security if they take that risk.

SSI:

A related issue is the SSI marriage penalty. SSI funds come from tax revenues and are not disbursed from the social security trust fund, but they do provide funds to help individuals who are disabled. The current payment amount for SSI is \$994 per month for an individual and \$1491 for a couple. Congress needs to eliminate this marriage penalty for SSI recipients, increase asset limits, and make sure that the SSI payment is at least at the federal poverty line as this is often the only source of income for these individuals. The increased use of tax revenue to fund these payments will come from implementing a fair tax system where everyone pays their share and through enforcement of taxes and fraud penalties.

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