



# DSA Resolution on Social Security

*Resolved by the National Political Committee of Democratic Socialists of America, January 1999:*

The Democratic Socialists of America is greatly concerned about the acceleration of recent efforts to dismantle and privatize the U.S. Social Security system.

In a situation where progressive economists are questioning if there are significant problems with the system's solvency, we find it alarmist, to say the least, that political commentators and opinion-makers across much of the political spectrum feel the need to back major changes in the nation's most popular and successful public program. Furthermore, we find it extremely disingenuous to say that these changes need to be made by Congress within the next year.

The only reason we can see for such an outpouring of propaganda for privatization is heavy funding from the interests that would benefit most from such action: banks, brokerage houses, and insurance companies. It is these forces that would gut the public good for the benefit of a few. Corporations like American Express, Fidelity Investments, Aetna, and State Street Bank are pouring millions of dollars into the coffers of front groups like the Cato Institute, Americans Discuss Social Security and the Concord Coalition. The purpose of these front groups is simply to instill fear in the hearts of the American public that Social Security is in immediate jeopardy and that drastic immediate solutions are necessary. Once the fear is running rampant in society, it is no trick for corporate-funded experts and right-wing ideologues to step into the gap, and propose privatization plans that would have been politically unthinkable even five years ago as the "solution" to Social Security's "problem."

Progressive opposition to this onslaught has been slow to develop. But as we approach the most crucial phase of the debate, popular resistance is indeed crystallizing, and organized labor and groups like the Gray Panthers and the National Council of Senior Citizens strive to take action to defend a social Social Security.

The Democratic Socialists of America, therefore, would now like to add our voices to the growing chorus of progressive organizations that are fighting to insure that Social Security emerge from this debate not only intact, but stronger than it was before. It is absolutely critical to the future well-being of the vast majority of working Americans that reasoned, reasonable, and visionary alternatives be put forth and made the law of the land. Failing that task will mean that one more nail has been driven into the coffin of economic, and perhaps political, democracy in America. If workers lose Social Security, then, we will be losing an important platform from which to build a better, more democratic, and more socialist society.

So, we intend to fight hard to defend Social Security. And we will fight to win.

To that end we propose the following set of Ten Principles to guide our activism:

1. Social Security is a right. DSA opposes any call to dismantle the Social Security system as anti-democratic and anti-worker.

2. Social Security is social insurance, not an individual investment program. DSA supports the principle of all workers pooling funds collectively to provide for everyone's basic economic needs in retirement--and ultimately from cradle-to-grave.
3. Social Security needs to be expanded to eventually protect workers of all ages from the vagaries of a market economy, not to be restricted in any way. DSA therefore opposes any potential change in Social Security that calls for raising the retirement age--which automatically means more workers will die before ever receiving any benefits from the program.
4. Social Security benefits need to be increased, not decreased below its already low level of payments. DSA opposes any potential change in Social Security that calls for lowering real benefits to retirees--which automatically means that more retired workers will live in poverty, than already do.
5. Contrary to what most mainstream pundits insist, Social Security is not in "crisis." DSA supports slowing down the debate on Social Security and taking no major legislative action on the program until all viewpoints have been carefully aired.
6. Social Security taxes on workers must not be increased. DSA opposes all regressive taxation plans currently being proposed to "reform" Social Security.
7. Social Security program should always raise additional funds in progressive ways and not through increases in the regressive payroll tax. DSA believes that one significant way to insure future solvency is to eliminate or raise significantly the current wage cap on income subject to the current rate of payroll tax.
8. Social Security must not be changed from a defined benefit program to a defined contribution program (in whole or in part).
9. Social Security must not be changed in any way that would force workers to bear any individual market risk against their future economic security.
10. Social Security may benefit the public good through collective public investment of a moderate portion of the Social Security Trust Fund. DSA could support such investment, but only if it is done by democratically-elected officials with full public oversight. We also advocate the investment be socially productive -- specifically in socially necessary sectors such as affordable housing and community development. The fund should only be invested in corporations in which workers and public representatives have a strong voice.

**Boston Democratic Socialists of America**  
**P.O. Box 51356, Boston MA 02205 (617) 354-5078**  
<http://dsaboston.org>

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