

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

Dear Colleague:

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.

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 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,



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Harry Reid
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



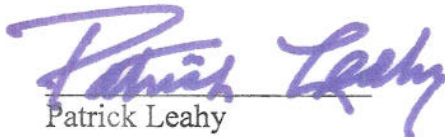
Mark Begich
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy
United States Senator



Ben Cardin
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

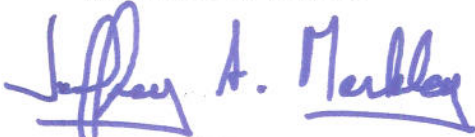
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



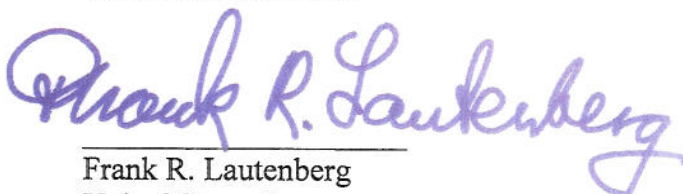
Al Franken
United States Senator



Tom Harkin
United States Senator



Jeff Merkley
United States Senator



Frank R. Lautenberg
United States Senator



Barbara Mikulski
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator

Barbara Boxer *Maria Cantwell*

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Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

Daniel K. Akaka *Tim Johnson*

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United States Senator

Tim Johnson
United States Senator

John D. Rockefeller IV *Daniel K. Inouye*

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United States Senator

Daniel K. Inouye
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Tom Udall *Robert Menendez*

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Robert Menendez
United States Senator

Carl Levin

Carl Levin
United States Senator

Kirsten E. Gillibrand

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Joe Manchin III

Joe Manchin III
United States Senator
