



In Iowa's Interest:

Protecting Social Security

by Senator Tom Harkin

Right now in Washington, we are having an important debate on the federal budget, which involves how we fund priorities for the fiscal year. Unfortunately, some are using this as an excuse to attack one of the bedrocks of the American middle class: Social Security.

Like many Iowans, I can personally attest to the critical role Social Security plays in the lives of Americans. My father had nothing more than an 8th grade education and worked in the coal mines for much of his life. He married a widow – my mother – and they bought a small farm in Iowa. In the Great Depression, he lost his farm and his savings and when I was 10 years old, my mother passed away. At that time, my father was 64, handicapped from black lung, with little savings to his name and three sons under the age of 18. Fortunately, that next year at age 65, he started to receive his Social Security checks – money he earned from years of hard work. This was our only income, and because of it, our family was able to stay together, my brothers and I were able to get an education and my father was able to keep his dignity.

This personal story is just one of the millions of examples of the important role Social Security continues to play for countless Americans. Social Security is the most successful domestic program in our nation's history. It lifts over 13 million seniors out of poverty every year, and for almost half of our seniors, Social Security makes up around 80 percent of their retirement income. It has provided millions of Americans with the chance to retire with dignity and will continue to be the foundation of a secure retirement as future generations enter their golden years.

Unfortunately, today the same people who wanted to leave Social Security to the whims of the stock market are now using the budget debate as an excuse to attack the hard earned benefits of working class families. The fact is Social Security has never contributed one dime to the federal deficit, nor is Social Security a long-term contributor to our national debt. In fact, Social Security will continue to pay every dollar promised for another 26 years. It is not in crisis.

So during our debate on the federal budget our message is simple: back off Social Security!

For more information on all that I am doing to protect Social Security, please visit my website at harkin.senate.gov. To see a speech I recently gave on the subject you can visit my Youtube page at www.youtube.com/SenatorTomHarkin.