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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

1102 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
(202) 225-3625

Washington, DC 20515-6348

<http://waysandmeans.house.gov>

May 22, 2002

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JANICE MAYS,
MINORITY CHIEF COUNSEL

Challenging Social Security Mistruths

Dear Republican Colleague:

Democrats continue to use Social Security for partisan political attacks. Our job is to protect Social Security by derailing the locomotive of their untruths and presenting the public with an honest debate.

We must let the public know that President Bush and Republicans are the ones primarily facing their responsibility, as the governing party, to propose solutions to protect and preserve our country's most important retirement and anti-poverty program. In return, Democrats have battered us with vicious verbal attacks, the most relentless being that we propose to "privatize" Social Security.

As Chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means and Chairman of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Social Security, we have challenged these allegations in letters to the *National Journal* and Minority Leader Gephardt. Our letters are enclosed for your use in responding to Democratic distortions.

We urge you to respond to such attacks if they are made in your district. We know that when we talk openly, honestly, and genuinely about Social Security, our constituents, regardless of party affiliation, listen intently and want to know more. Well informed voters are what our nation needs.

Should you need any other information on Social Security, please contact Kim Hildred, Staff Director of the Subcommittee on Social Security, at 225-9263.

Best regards,



Bill Thomas
Chairman



E. Clay Shaw
Chairman,
Social Security Subcommittee

Enclosures

BILL THOMAS, CALIFORNIA,
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House of Representatives COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

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May 1, 2002

CHARLES B. RANGEL, NEW YORK,
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ALLISON H. GILES,
CHIEF OF STAFF
JANICE MAYS,
MINORITY CHIEF COUNSEL

The National Journal Group, Inc.
1501 M Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Editor,

In the April 27th story, *A Strong Sense of Entitlement*, I was shocked and dismayed to find in the middle of my quote the words, "privatization bill." These words do not define my position and reflect unacceptable editorial judgment on the part of National Journal.

I am forced to explicitly and publicly disavow this distortion. I did not and would never describe the Social Security legislation introduced by Rep. Clay Shaw (R-FL) as a "privatization bill."

That is because Rep. Shaw's bill has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with "privatizing" anything. It is a measured, responsible proposal for strengthening and preserving Social Security for our children, grandchildren and future generations.

Social Security is a sacred trust, and I have and will always defend that trust. And I can assure you that no Republican plan privatizes Social Security. Our plans will strengthen the program. The Social Security Administration will remain in tact. Seniors will still receive government checks. Americans will receive their promised benefits both today and tomorrow.

That's why characterizing Rep. Shaw's bill or the Republicans' position as "privatization" is a demagogic falsehood. It is a demagogic falsehood when uttered by Rep. Dick Gephardt (D-MO). It is a demagogic falsehood when uttered by Rep. Bob Matsui (D-CA). It is a demagogic falsehood when printed by National Journal.

Worse it is irresponsible, unethical, and dishonest journalism to reconstruct and distort a statement made by me to make it appear as though I uttered this demagogic falsehood. It is nothing less than a partisan hit-job by a publication that purports to be an objective source of reporting on public policy issues.

National Journal should be ashamed.

Sincerely,



Bill Thomas

E. CLAY SHAW, JR., FLORIDA, CHAIRMAN
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

WASHINGTON, DC 20515

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SECURITY

April 30, 2002

The Honorable Richard A. Gephardt
Office of the Democratic Leader
H-204 Capitol
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Minority Leader Gephardt:

As I informed you in my letter of March 25th, a full debate on retirement security has already begun in the Committee on Ways and Means. Chairman Bill Thomas has commenced a hearing series that will include an examination of proposals to strengthen Social Security. If you wish to have a full and complete debate on how best to secure this vitally important program, then I urge you to come before the Committee with your full and complete legislative proposal.

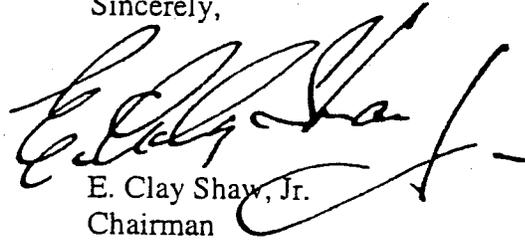
The truth is that it has primarily been members of the Republican majority that have had the courage to fashion proposals strengthening Social Security for the next generation. For their effort and fortitude, they have received nothing but the most vicious attacks, many of them outright lies. The foremost attack is that Republicans will "privatize" Social Security. This is patently false. No Republican plan "privatizes" Social Security, nor do any of the three options proposed by the President's bipartisan Commission. This scare tactic must end.

My own legislation fully protects current law benefits, does not increase taxes, and allows individuals to voluntarily own personal accounts that ensure their benefits will never be lowered. In every Republican proposal, the Social Security Administration will continue to administer the program, determine the benefits and send the checks to retirees, just as it does today. Our proposals are modeled on the very government retirement plan that Members of Congress and federal employees have contributed to and successfully retired from since 1986 – the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). I assume that you and your colleagues don't view TSP as a "risky scheme."

You've said that proceeding with a discharge petition will allow Americans to know what Republicans support for strengthening Social Security. However, both Republicans and Democrats have already voted on the parameters for strengthening Social Security last December by a vote of 415 to 5. That resolution called for saving Social Security as soon as possible without cutting benefits, raising taxes, or ignoring the special needs of women and minorities.

The American people have us all on record. Therefore, our next step should not be partisan gimmicks in the form of discharge petitions. Our goal must be one of policy, not politics, because Social Security is a ticking time bomb for our kids and grandkids. Neither Republicans nor Democrats can fix Social Security without the other. The time has come for us to work together to strengthen Social Security.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Clay Shaw, Jr.", written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above the printed name and title.

E. Clay Shaw, Jr.
Chairman