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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 25<sup>th</sup>, 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.

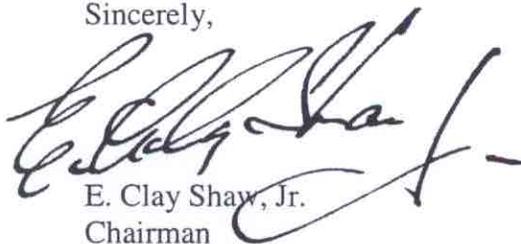
The truth is that it has primarily been members of the Republican majority that have had the courage to fashion proposals strengthening Social Security for the next generation. For their effort and fortitude, they have received nothing but the most vicious attacks, many of them outright lies. The foremost 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