



NCPSSM

National Committee to Preserve
Social Security and Medicare

Newsletter

www.ncpssm.org

Legislative Hotline: 1-800-998-0180

Celebrating Social Security and Medicare's Successes

In these days of seemingly never-ending sky-is-falling entitlement rhetoric, the National Committee's 25th Anniversary celebration offered a much-needed reminder of the critical roles Social Security and Medicare play in the lives of millions of Americans.

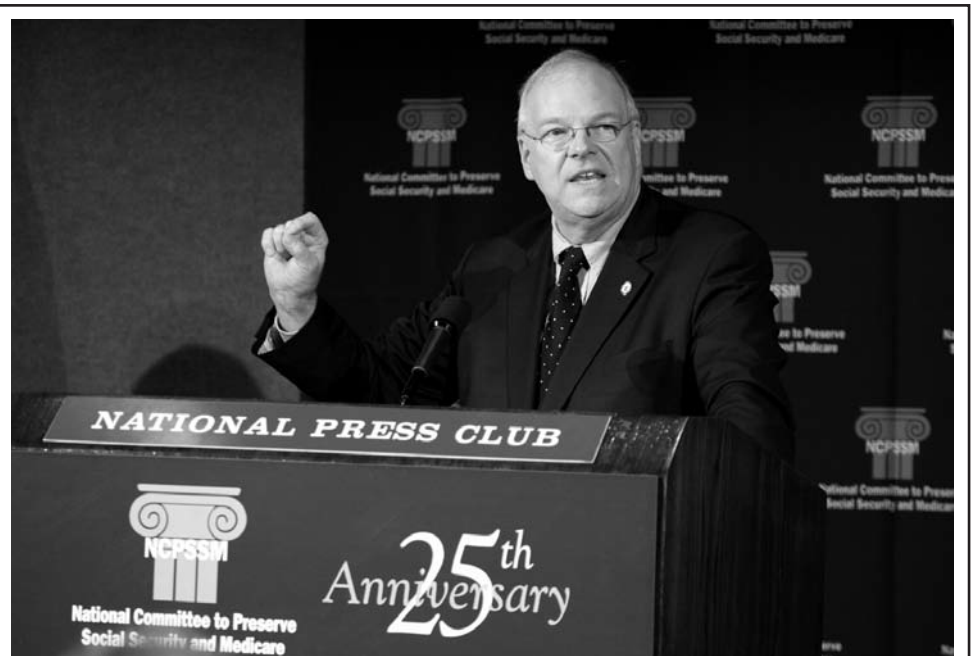
James Roosevelt, Jr., grandson of President Franklin Roosevelt and son of the National Committee's founder, reminded those in attendance why it's so important to continue fighting to preserve Social Security for future generations:

"My father believed as I do that Social Security was an essential part of maintaining the dignity of Americans throughout their lives. I'm pleased to say that, in spite of those who continue to misinform and advocate privatization (and they haven't gone away), the dedicated Social Security funding mechanism and the dedicated delivery system has been very successful in raising the vast majority of our elderly citizens out of poverty. I'd even suggest the National Committee is even more needed today than when it was created 25 years ago."

Lynda Johnson Robb accepted the National Committee's 2008 Lifetime Achievement Award on behalf of her

father, President Lyndon Johnson. She told the crowd:

"Medicare, completing FDR's Social Security legislation, helps seniors weather the rigors of old age and was a jewel in the crown of the Great Society. Daddy knew that it was not perfect and would have to be carefully guarded and improved where necessary by coming generations. Medicare is not a monument to him. Although, I take great pleasure that his name is associated with it. It is a



James Roosevelt, Jr., grandson of President Franklin Roosevelt and son of the National Committee's founder, James Roosevelt, reminds us why it's so important to continue fighting to preserve Social Security for future generations.

Ask Mary Jane



Q. I am currently retired after 25+ years working for the federal government and I draw an annuity. My wife is still working and intends to continue. She will turn 66 next this year. Does the fact that I draw a retirement from the federal government affect her Social Security income (she has survivor's benefits)? Will her continued employment affect this income?

A. Your Federal retirement annuity will have no affect whatsoever on your wife's right to her own Social Security or to a survivor Social Security benefit. Similarly, should you predecease her, her Social Security will not be affected by any Federal survivor annuity you may have provided.

Since your wife reaches full retirement age next year, her Social Security benefit receipt is subject to the higher annual earnings limitation (\$36,120 in 2008). Beginning with the month she reaches full retirement age, she is entitled to a monthly benefit regardless of earnings. If she applies for benefits to begin in January, she will be entitled to a Social Security benefit for all 12 months if her 2008 earnings do not exceed the annual limit. For each \$3 in excess earnings, \$1 in benefits would be withheld.

Q. Would you be kind enough to tell me the maximum monthly Social Security one can receive?

A. Maximum Social Security benefits are paid to a wage earner who earns maximum taxable wages in every year between age 21 and the year of retirement.

The maximum payable to a wage earner retiring at full retirement age (65 years and ten months) in 2007 is \$2,116 a month. In 2008 the maximum payable at age 66 will be \$2,185. Up to 50 percent additional is payable to a retirement-age dependent spouse. The maximum payable in future years can be expected to rise as maximum taxable wages rise.

Delayed retirement credits can increase benefits payable to wage earners who defer receiving benefits past full retirement age. For example, a wage earner reaching full retirement age in 2008 receives an 8 percent benefit increase for each full year benefits are deferred (3/4 percent per month) between full retirement age and age 70.

The *Wall Street Journal* has recognized the National Committee's *Ask Mary Jane* as "the best source of help for questions about Social Security." Send your questions to NCPSSM Senior Policy Analyst Mary Jane Yarrington at NCPSSM, 10 G Street, NE, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20002-4215, or via email to maryjane@ncpssm.org.

"Celebrating Successes" continued from front

pleasure that his name is associated with it. It is a living monument to the spirit of the American people and I'm proud of that too."

National Committee President/CEO Barbara Kennelly summed up the day this way:

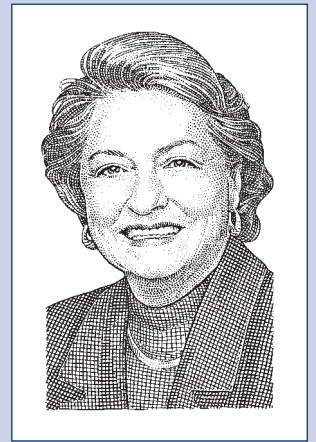


Lynda Johnson Robb with Barbara B. Kennelly accepting the National Committee's 2008 Lifetime Achievement Award on behalf of her father, President Lyndon Johnson.

"All of us in this room care about Social Security and Medicare, not just for ourselves, but for our children and grandchildren. We will always speak out to protect those already in retirement, because Social Security and Medicare are critical to their ability to live from day to day. But we also speak for their 45 year old sons and daughters, who are struggling to make ends meet so finding extra money to save for retirement simply isn't in the picture. And we speak for the 20-somethings, who have their entire future in front of them and so they aren't yet thinking about the challenges of life they will surely face someday."

Our Anniversary speakers put it best, "it's all about family." Grandparents and parents ensuring the safety net they count on will remain for their children and grandchildren. It's a commitment the National Committee made 25 years ago and will continue for many more years to come. Video clips of our anniversary celebration can be viewed on our website at http://www.ncpssm.org/event_highlights.

Letter from the President ...



Dear Friends,

The National Committee has had many reasons to celebrate since our last newsletter. In June, we marked our 25th Anniversary. Hundreds of our members, friends, and allies in the aging community joined us at a wonderful National Press Club celebration. In many ways it felt like a family reunion as Linda Johnson Robb, daughter of President Lyndon Johnson, and James Roosevelt, Jr., grandson of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, reminisced about their father and grandfather and the critical roles Social Security and Medicare continue to play in the lives of millions of Americans.

Mrs. Robb told us her father knew “Medicare would have to be carefully guarded and improved through the generations.” Yet as we know, the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 has neither improved nor carefully guarded the program’s core mission to provide fair and dependable healthcare coverage for America’s retirees and the disabled. So you may ask, why are we celebrating? Because not long after Lynda Robb’s comments, Congress cast two very important votes to slow down the destructive privatization of Medicare.

Thanks to hard won bipartisan support in the House and Senate, America’s seniors and their caregivers averted physician pay cuts and began the process of reducing some of the wasteful subsidies to private insurance companies. The Congressional override of the President’s veto of this bill was an important win for America’s seniors. Then, shortly after that victory, the House voted to delay arbitrary Medicare cuts triggered by privatization legislation passed during President Bush’s first term. National Committee members played a vital role in passage of both of these new Medicare bills and our voices made a difference in this debate. Your letters, calls, and emails to Congress clearly reinforced the need for Washington to reconsider these destructive privatization provisions written by and for the drug and insurance industries. Of course, these votes have not undone the damage to traditional Medicare caused by privatization; however, they are encouraging first steps in our efforts to fulfill Medicare’s mission.

The question now is ... Will the new Congress and President build on the progress we’ve seen in recent months and reverse the push to privatization or continue the status quo where industry profits trump sound healthcare policy?

We’re just weeks away from an election day that may determine the answer to that question. To help you prepare for this important vote we’ve analyzed the legislation crucial to seniors and their families considered by the 110th Congress. We’ve included it in our Voting Guide, which details this legislation, and the votes cast by your member of Congress. We hope you will use this guide and share it with others before casting your Election Day ballots.

Barbara B. Kennelly