

January 19, 2012

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

On behalf of millions of members and supporters of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, I am writing to encourage you to speak out in favor of our vital social insurance safety net programs during your State of the Union address on January 24.

Congress can reduce the deficit without cuts to these cherished and successful programs if it focuses on improving the economy and asking those who have done extremely well in the last decade to finally pay their fair share. This is a message that you have been carrying to the American public recently, and we fully support your effort in this regard.

Seventy percent of the American people of all ages and political stripes soundly reject the idea that cuts in Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid should be part of a deficit reduction package. That's why we urge you during your State of the Union address to make clear that you oppose cuts to the social insurance safety net and that you stand with the American people.

In addition, we ask you to announce your support for replacing the Social Security payroll tax cut with the "Making Work Pay" tax credit as an alternative method of stimulating the economy. We understand the difficulties of this approach, but it is more effective and better public policy.

While we support the use of general revenues to make up for the reduction in payroll taxes paid to the Social Security trust fund as a result of the payroll tax cut, we also fear that this trade off would leave Social Security increasingly dependent on both general revenue and the actions of Congress for its funding. Such a result is a dramatic and dangerous departure from relying on workers' contributions, which have so successfully funded the program since its enactment in 1935. Extending and expanding the payroll tax cut further endangers Social Security's financial integrity and could undermine our efforts to defend the program from benefit cuts or privatization.

Social Security is paid for, earned by and promised to American workers, and it should remain that way.

During your State of the Union address, we hope you will offer assurances that the payroll tax cut will not be extended again or paid for by Medicare cuts. We especially urge you to assure Americans that the extension of the payroll tax cut will not undercut the financial integrity of Social Security or provide justification for benefit cuts or privatization. This program should be protected - now, and forever.

The National Committee believes it is extremely important that you counter the misinformation being spread about our social insurance safety net during your address to Congress on January 24 and to use this opportunity to remind all Americans that protecting and strengthening Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid – programs that provide health and economic security to older Americans today and in the future – is a moral imperative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Max Richtman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Max Richtman
President and CEO