HEY, MR. PRESIDENT

With Even More Republicans Opposed to Privatizing Social Security, It is Time to Work with Democrats to Strengthen Social Security

As Congressional Republican Leaders and President Bush campaign to privatize Social Security, polls show public support dropping for private accounts [WSJ/NBC 2/17/05]. Just as worrisome for Republican leaders: Opposition from rank-and-file Republicans continues to increase. Two weeks ago, approximately 29 Republicans had voiced opposition to privatization. After a rough week at home, five more Republicans have joined their ranks – Representatives Chabot, Goode, McHugh, Mica and Turner – for a total of 34 Republicans who have expressed either outright opposition to or serious reservations about all or major parts of the president's privatization plan. Yet, Republicans can only lose 14 members in the House and still pass a Social Security privatization plan in the face of unified Democratic opposition. It is time for the President to stop only talking about bipartisanship and start acting bipartisan to strengthen Social Security.

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1. Rep. Bob Beauprez (R-CO):

- "I'm opposed to reducing benefits." [Rocky Mountain News, 8/28/02]

2. Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY):

- "I've never been a gambler ... I don't want to gamble with Social Security trust fund moneys. And so I am very, very skeptical of the so-called plans to privatize. And I think a disservice is being done to a great many Americans by sort of sounding the alarm that everything's going to hell in a hand basket and we're going to be broke by 2018. That simply is not so." [*WAMC radio New York, 1/20/05*]

3. Rep. Jeb Bradley (R-NH):

- "I will not support privatization of Social Security. That is crystal clear." [Union Leader, 10/17/02]
- "We have to protect and preserve Social Security for today's recipients and tomorrow's recipients. I'm clearly not in favor of privatizing it." [The Union Leader, 10/22/02]
- "I think that people are skeptical at this point in time over privatization." [The Union Leader 12/05/02]

4. Rep. Ginny Brown-Waite (R-FL):

- In 2002, the *St. Petersburg Times* reported that Brown-Waite promised voters "not to vote to reduce Social Security benefits." [Ledger (Lakeland, Florida), 9/20/02, St. Petersburg Times (Florida), 12/2/02]

5. Rep. Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV):

- According to the *Washington Post*, Moore Capito told reporters in 2002 that she was "opposed to putting Social Security funds in the stock market and investing it willy-nilly, like Russian roulette." [Washington Post, 9/13/02]

- [Constituents] wanted to know if Capito, a Republican in a traditionally Democratic state that has twice voted for Bush, supports the president's approach. 'Not at this moment,' she said." [CQ, 2/28/05]

6. Rep. Steve Chabot (R-OH):

- "Rep. Steve Chabot of Cincinnati said he would not support any plan to reduce benefits or raise taxes" [Associated Press, 2/18/05]

7. Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK):

- "I do not support any effort to privatize Social Security." [www.tomcoleforcongress.com/news090902.asp]

8. Rep. Geoff Davis (R-KY):

- In 2001, Rep. Geoff Davis told the *Cincinnati Enquirer* that he "support[ed] the creation of private investment accounts for people paying into Social Security." Three years later Davis told the *Cincinnati Enquirer* that "he does not favor privatization, adding his position has been improperly portrayed in the past." [Cincinnati Enquirer, 10/11/01, 9/23/04]

9. Rep. Tom Davis (R-VA):

- "I'm not convinced yet." former NRCC Chair Tom Davis (R-VA) on the partial privatization of Social Security. [New York Times, 1/13/04]

- "Floating a bond issue of a trillion dollars is not the message you want to send to the markets right now. Deficits are beginning to matter." – Rep. Tom Davis [Wall Street Journal, 12/01/04]

10. Rep. Jo Ann Emerson (R-MO):

- "Rep. Jo Ann Emerson (R-Mo.), an Appropriations Committee member, gave voice to the GOP's internal opposition in a Jan. 24 form letter to concerned constituents. The letter undercuts the heart of Bush's proposal… 'I cannot support any plan to allow workers to place any portion of their Social Security taxes in risky investments, especially those that depend upon the stock market to appreciate in value,' she said in the letter, obtained by the Web log Talking Points Memo. 'It remains my opinion that Social Security reform is not necessary at all if Congress would seriously address Medicare reform, balance the budget, erase the trade deficit, and make pension reform a real priority.'" [Washington Post, 2/12/05]

11. Rep. Michael Ferguson (R-NJ):

- In 2002, the *New Jersey Jewish News* reported that Ferguson was opposed to "changing Social Security benefits." [New Jersey Jewish News, 10/31/02, Courier News, 10/21/00]

12. Rep. James Gerlach (R-PA):

- According to the *Associated Press,* Gerlach "stated his opposition to privatizing Social Security." [Associated Press, 7/24/02]

13. Rep. Virgil H. Goode (R-VA):

- "I am negatively inclined toward the private, personal accounts paid for out of Social Security employer and employee taxes." [Washington Post, 2/24/05]

14. Rep. Katherine Harris (R-FL):

- According to the *Sarasota Herald Tribune,* Representative Katherine Harris (R-FL) "opposes privatizing the program, or allowing individuals to invest their Social Security money in the stock market." [Sarasota Herald-Tribune (Florida), 10/18/02]

- *Bloomberg News* reported that Harris had "expressed reservations about Bush's proposal to partially privatize Social Security." [The Hill, 2/3/05]

15. Rep. Jeb Hensarling (R-TX):

- "I strongly oppose privatizing Social Security." [www.jebforcongress.org]

16. Rep. Tom Latham (R-IA):

- "Congressman Latham also never has, or will, vote to: privatize Social Security." [Latham Press Release, 11/4/02]

17. Rep. Thaddeus McCotter (R- MI):

- In 2002, Rep. Thad McCotter released a statement saying "I would be inclined to let people set up personal savings accounts… allow people to invest and insure against loss. Two months later McCotter clarified, explaining that he "opposed individual investment accounts within Social Security." [The Detroit News, 7/29/02]

18. Rep. John McHugh (R-NY):

- McHugh **"**doesn't want to change a program that's been 'successful for four decades.'" [CQ Weekly, 1/24/05]

19. Rep. John Mica (R-FL):

- "Mica said he has already told constituents, 'I won't take anything away from current recipients, or what has already been promised to folks about to retire.' As for the proposal on private investments, he said, 'I am concerned about making any investments (of Social Security) funds in speculative funds.'" [St. Augustine Record, 2/23/05]

20. Rep. Candice Miller (R-MI):

- According to the *Macomb Daily*, Miller "part[s] with the GOP in opposing Social Security privatization." [Macomb Daily, 11/6/02]

21. Rep. Jim Nussle (R-IA):

- "I am opposed to privatizing Social Security. . . . We must do more to encourage savings, investment and growth so our seniors can be secure in their retirement." [Des Moines Register, 10/23/02]

- "Keep (Social Security) the way it is, but grow investment possibilities." [Telegraph Herald (Dubuque, IA), 8/1/02]

22. Rep. Steve Pearce (R-NM):

- Pearce is "unequivocally opposed to the privatization of Social Security citing the need to maintain the benefit level for all qualified recipients." [Pearce Press Release, 9/06/02]

23. Rep. Chip Pickering (R-MS):

- According to the *Clarion Ledger*, "In a bid to attract older voters, U.S. Rep. Chip Pickering told Mississippians in new television advertisements that he opposes the privatization of Social Security. Until very recently, however, the Republican favored allowing individuals to invest some of their retirement taxes." [Clarion Ledger, 10/26/02]

24. Rep. Jon Porter (R-NV):

- According to the *Associated Press*, Representative Jon Porter (R-NE) "supported the idea [of privatization] while running for Congress two years ago but is now 'adamantly opposed' to allowing people to invest part of their Social Security retirement in private investment accounts. [The Associated Press State & Local Wire, 10/19/02]

25. Rep. Denny Rehberg (R-MT):

- According to the *Great Falls Tribune*, Rehberg "says he's a long way from feeling comfortable about 'privatizing' or allowing 'personal accounts' with Social Security funds, as suggested by the president." Rehberg says "I haven't seen anything I can support yet." [Great Falls Tribune, 11/1/7/04]

26. Rep. Mike Rogers (R-AL):

- According to the *Columbus Ledger-Enquirer*, in 2002 Rogers said that he "won't vote for any plan that privatizes Social Security, raises the Social Security tax, raises the retirement age or erodes benefits." [Columbus Ledger-Enquirer, 10/13/02]

- In 2002, Rogers' campaign spokesman, Ben Mitchell told CQ Daily Monitor that Rogers opposed the establishment of personal retirement accounts under the Social Security program. "That is a form of privatization. Mike Rogers is against it," Mitchell said. [Congressional Quarterly Daily Monitor, 9/24/02]

27. Joe Schwarz (R-MI):

- Rep. Joe Schwarz of Michigan, said Social Security "has worked well for so long, I don't think it needs any wholesale change." [Gannett News, 2/4/05]

28. Rep. Clay Shaw (R-FL):

- If [President Bush] goes to a carve-out, I think he's got some real rough sledding." [National Journal's Congress Daily, 12/ 9/04]

- "I do not favor privatizing any of the wage taxes currently going into Social Security … I do not favor taking a dime out of the existing system … That would only make things more difficult." [New York Times, 5/1/03]

29. Rep. John Shimkus (R-IL):

- According to the *State Journal-Register*, in 2002, Shimkus "said he would oppose any proposal that would allow for Social Security revenues, including payroll taxes, to be invested in the stock market." [The Sate Journal-Register, 8/14/02

30. Rep. Rob Simmons (R-CT):

- "Why stir up a political hornet's nest . . . when there is no urgency … When does the program go belly up? 2042. I will be dead by then." [Washington Post, 1/11/05]

- The *Washington Post* reported that Representative Rob Simmons (R-CT) "said there is no way he will support Bush's idea of allowing younger Americans to divert some of their payroll taxes into private accounts, especially when there are more pressing needs, such as shoring up Medicare and providing armor to U.S. troops in Iraq." [Washington Post, 1/11/05]

- "You don't privatize a public program. This was a program designed to provide a minimum guarantee … You start diverting Social Security revenues and you're going to impact benefits." [Associated Press, 1/10/05]

31. Rep. Charles Taylor (R-NC):

- "I joined with 415 other members of the House in calling for the strengthening of Social Security without raising payroll taxes, without reducing benefits and without raising the retirement age. I will oppose any plan to privatize Social Security." [AARP, 2002 Candidate Questionnaire]

32. Rep. Mike Turner (R-OH):

- "Rep. Mike Turner of Dayton said he opposed any plan that would divert money from the Social Security system to open private accounts." [Associated Press, 2/18/05]

33. Rep. Heather Wilson (R-NM):

- "I oppose privatization of our safety net." [Questionnaire, The Associated Press State & Local Wire, 10/22/02]

34. Rep. C.W. Bill Young (R-FL):

- "I'm not going to support anything that makes Social Security subject to the stock market…I have always been very careful to make a decision regardless of politics. I don't think a decision should be made based on whether you support the president or don't support the president." [St. Petersburg Times, 1/31/05]