

The Great Global Social Security Giveaway?

by Rep. Ron Paul

As we ring in the new year, dark clouds are gathering over our already dangerously fragile Social Security system. In December (2002), the press reported on a looming deal between the Administration and the government of Mexico which would make hundreds of thousands of Mexican citizens eligible for U.S. Social Security benefits. The centerpiece of the agreement would be a so-called “totalization,” which would mean that even if a Mexican citizen did not work in the United States long enough to qualify for Social Security, the number of years worked in Mexico would be added to bring up the total and thus make the Mexican worker eligible for cash transfers from the United States.

Worse still, thousands of foreigners who would qualify for U.S. Social Security actually came to the United States and worked here *illegally*. Under “totalization,” a foreigner who came to the United States illegally could work fewer than the required number of years, return to Mexico for the rest of his working years, and collect full U.S. Social Security benefits while living

in Mexico. That is an insult to the millions of Americans who pay their entire working lives into the system and now face the possibility that there may be nothing left when it is their turn to retire.

The proposed agreement is nothing more than a financial reward to those who have willingly and knowingly violated our own immigration laws. Talk about an incentive for illegal immigration! How many more would break the law to come into this country if promised U.S. government paychecks for life? Is creating a global welfare state on the back of the American taxpayer a good idea? The program also established a very disturbing precedent of U.S. foreign aid to individual citizens rather than to states.

Estimates of what this deal with the Mexican government would cost top one billion dollars per year. As the system braces for a steep increase in those who will be drawing from the Social Security trust fund, it makes no sense to expand it into a global welfare system. Social Security was designed to provide support for retired American citizens who worked in the United States. We should be shoring up the system for those Americans who have paid in for decades, not expanding it to cover foreigners who have not.

Supporters of the Social Security to Mexico deal may attempt to

downplay the effect the agreement would have on the system, but actions speak louder than words: According to several press reports, the State Department and the Social Security Administration are already negotiating to build a new building in Mexico City to handle the expected rush of applicants for this new program!

It is uncertain whether the Administration will seek Congressional approval for this agreement. Let’s hope that such a substantive move — with such serious financial implications — will not be made by Executive Order.

In the 107th Congress, I introduced the Social Security Preservation Act (HR 219) which would ensure that all money in the Social Security trust fund is spent solely on Social Security. As Congress continues to demonstrate an inability to control spending that threatens the Social Security trust fund, the need for this legislation has never been greater. That is why I intend to re-introduce this legislation in the 108th Congress. Social Security should be limited to United States citizens and nationals who have paid into the system. It should not be a global giveaway. •

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