

we are equal in our rights. We own ourselves, and no one else may own us. We own the government, and the government does not own us. We are entitled to our lives with the talents that God gave us. Any form of government that interferes with these rights is wrong.

But in the world today are rogue nations that are growing in strength and violate these principles. They constitute a menace to our freedom and to civilization itself.

At home, our government grows ever greater in its size, in its reach, and in its expense. The law is flouted increasingly by high authority. And our people say with increasing intensity that they mistrust and even fear their government. It may be for the people, but it is less and less “of and by” the people.

On this 150th anniversary of Lincoln’s death, let us be here reminded and dedicated to that cause for which Lincoln himself gave the last full measure of devotion. Let us dedicate ourselves, in Lincoln’s words, “to finish the work we are in,” so that we “may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.”

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:44 p.m., recessed until 2 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. FLAKE).

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET, FISCAL YEAR 2016—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

If no one yields time, the time will be charged equally.

The Senator from Vermont.

MOTION TO INSTRUCT

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I send to the desk my motion to instruct conferees.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Vermont [Mr. SANDERS] moves that the managers on the part of the Senate at the conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the House amendment to the resolution S. Con. Res. 11 be instructed to insist that the final conference report include a deficit-neutral reserve fund for legislation related to retirement benefits, which may not include legislation cutting benefits under the old-age, survivors, and disability insurance program established under title II of the Social Security Act, increasing the retirement age, or privatizing the old-age, survivors, and disability insurance program.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, as I mentioned earlier, I happen to believe the Republican budget we will be discussing today moves us in exactly the wrong direction. At a time when the

middle class is in decline and the gap between the very rich and everybody else is growing wider, what the Republican budget does is make ferocious attacks on programs desperately depended upon by working families while at the same time providing outrageous tax breaks to the very wealthiest of the wealthy. That makes no sense to me at all.

One area where the Republican budget is negligent—one of many areas where the Republican budget is negligent—is in the issue of Social Security. Social Security is perhaps the most important and successful Federal program that was ever initiated. It is life and death to millions of seniors and people with disabilities in this country, and it has a history of enormous success. Before Social Security was established, about half of the seniors in this country lived in poverty. Today, while too high, that number is somewhere around 10 percent.

Unfortunately, in recent years what we have seen is an increase in senior poverty. We have seen many seniors struggling to pay their bills, to heat their homes, and to buy the medicine they need. It seems to me that in this moment, not only should we not be talking about cutting Social Security, as many of our Republican colleagues are, we should be talking about expanding Social Security benefits. I have introduced legislation to do just that. But today I rise to bring forth legislation—bring forth a motion to instruct the budget conferees to include a deficit-neutral reserve fund to protect retirement benefits by not cutting Social Security benefits, by not raising the retirement age, and by not privatizing Social Security. So in essence, what this motion to instruct says is that we go on record as Members of the U.S. Senate that we will not cut Social Security benefits, that we will not raise the retirement age, and that we will not privatize Social Security.

At a time of massive wealth and income inequality, when 99 percent of all of the new income generated in this country is going to the top 1 percent and when over half of the American people have less than \$10,000 in savings, the last thing any Member of the Senate should be thinking about is cutting Social Security. Today, the average Social Security benefit is just \$1,328 a month—not a lot of money.

Now, 20 percent of senior citizens are living on an average income of just \$7,600 a year. Frankly, I don’t know how anybody lives on an income of \$7,600 a year. I don’t know how you buy food. I don’t know how you buy the medicine you need, how you take care of your basic needs. But that is the reality. More than one-third of our senior citizens rely on Social Security for virtually all of their income. In other words, Social Security for them—more than a third—is not just a small part of their total income, it is virtually all of their income. Two-thirds of American

seniors depend on Social Security for more than half of their income.

The reality is, despite some of the rhetoric we hear around here or see on TV, we do not have a Social Security crisis. America has a retirement crisis. Given this reality, our job is to expand Social Security benefits, not cut them.

I have been distressed that in three out of the four major Budget Committee hearings held this year, Republicans invited witnesses who testified in support of cutting Social Security. John Engler, the head of the Business Roundtable, representing the CEOs of some of the largest corporations and Wall Street banks in this country, was one of the Republican witnesses. Mr. Engler and the Business Roundtable are the leaders of corporate America. These are the guys who make millions of dollars a year in salary. These are the guys who have huge retirement benefits. They are asking Congress to cut Social Security COLAs for senior citizens and disabled veterans and to raise the retirement age to 70 years of age.

Imagine that. People who are multimillionaires and have huge retirement benefits are coming to Capitol Hill and telling Members of Congress to cut Social Security. It turns out, in fact, that the CEOs of the Business Roundtable have retirement benefits of their own of some \$88,000 a month. So we have the heads of large corporations who have retirement benefits of \$88,000 a month—\$1 million a year—and they are telling the Congress to cut benefits for people who are trying to survive on \$14,000 a year. That is an outrage.

I am getting a little bit tired of being lectured by CEOs of large corporations who want to cut the Social Security benefits of elderly people. That is wrong.

I am also tired of hearing folks on TV say that Social Security is going broke. Well, the truth is Social Security is not going broke. Social Security has a \$2.8 trillion surplus and could pay out every benefit owed to every eligible American for the next 18 years. Now, is 18 years a terribly long time? No, it is not. Should we develop legislation to extend Social Security for decades after those 18 years? Yes, we should, and I have done that. But, please, I hope that my colleagues will not stand up here and tell us that Social Security is going broke because it is not.

I believe the American people feel very strongly that in these difficult times Social Security is a major safety net for so many of the elderly and disabled. When we vote tonight, our job is to send a very, very clear message that the Senate is not going to cut Social Security, it is not going to privatize Social Security, and it is not going to raise the age at which people get those Social Security benefits.

With that, I yield the floor for the Senator from Hawaii.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.