

do about us?” See, that’s where the debate is going to be headed. Because you’re going to get your check if you’ve retired. It’s the people coming up that are starting to ask the question. And one of the reasons I asked Sarah Joy to join us, because she’s representative of a lot of people. They said, “Oh, don’t worry, 21-year-olds don’t pay attention to this.” I don’t think it’s true.

Ms. Hays. Neither do I.

The President. That’s good. You got any other wisdom?

Ms. Hays. Well, I’ve been imparted some wisdom by some student government presidents. I’ve been working on executive staff at LSU for the past couple of years, so I’ve been blessed to be a part of that system.

The President. So people are talking about this.

Ms. Hays. Yes, sir.

The President. That’s important. And they’re going to keep talking about it, because I’m going to keep talking about it. I want people to understand, people who are 21 years old, that you’re facing a steep hill to climb if the Government doesn’t act. And there’s a lot of talk in Washington

about, you know, “Bush brought this up. Why did he bring it up?” And I told you why I brought it up. But I also believe this. I believe when the people figure out we have a problem and seniors hear that nothing’s going to change, woe to the politician who doesn’t come to the table; woe to the person who tries to block this for partisan reasons. The people of this country want problem solvers, not problem creators. They are unhappy with the status quo. It’s time to come together and save the Social Security system for generations to come.

I’m honored you gave me a chance to come to Shreveport, Louisiana. May God bless you, and may God continue to bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:45 p.m. in the Gold Dome at the Centenary College of Louisiana. In his remarks, he referred to William G. Anderson, chairman, board of trustees, and Kenneth Schwaub, president, Centenary College of Louisiana; Ernie “The Big Cat” Ladd, former professional football player and wrestler; and Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida.

Statement on the Anniversary of the Terrorist Attacks in Madrid, Spain March 11, 2005

On March 11, we remember the lives lost one year ago in Madrid.

The bombings in Spain were a grim reminder that there are evil people in the world who are willing to kill innocent life. The terrorists hate and target every country that stands for democracy, tolerance, and freedom. They kill the innocent—children and their mothers on a commuter train—without conscience or mercy.

The world is united in our determination to defeat global terrorism. We share a com-

mon faith in the value of freedom and the sanctity of life. We will continue to fight terror and advance freedom so that the world will be more peaceful.

For those who lost loved ones on March 11, it has been a year of sorrow and a year of healing. I join all Americans in sending our expressions of sympathy and solidarity on this solemn day of remembrance.

May God bless the people of Spain and the souls of the departed.

The President's Radio Address *March 12, 2005*

Good morning. Over the last few weeks, I have traveled across our Nation and met with tens of thousands of you to discuss my plans for strengthening Social Security. I share a great responsibility with your Representatives in Congress. We must fix the system permanently so it will be there for our children and grandchildren.

I have been to 15 States, and I'm just getting started. On every visit, I am assuring those of you born before 1950 that Social Security will remain the same for you: No changes. No matter what the scare ads or politicians might tell you, you will get your checks. You grandparents also understand we have got to fix the holes in this vital safety net for future generations. I appreciate the wisdom of our seniors, and I welcome your input on how to strengthen the system.

You younger workers know what is happening to Social Security. The present pay-as-you-go system is going broke. Huge numbers of baby boomers, like me, will be retiring soon, and we are living longer, and our benefits are rising. At the same time, fewer workers will be paying into the system to support a growing number of retirees. Therefore, the Government is making promises it cannot keep.

Still, some folks are playing down the problem and say we can fix it later. The fact is, we have got a serious problem, and we need to fix it now. If you are in your twenties or if you have children or grandchildren in their twenties, the idea of Social Security collapsing is no small matter, and it should not be a small matter to the Congress.

In 1983, Congress enacted what they thought was a 75-year fix to save Social Security from bankruptcy. This bipartisan solution turned out to be temporary because it did not address the system's fundamental flaws. Two years later, Social Security

was headed out of balance again. Now some in Washington are talking about another 75-year fix, which means we will be back to the starting line a few years from now. We do not need a bandaid solution for Social Security. We want to solve this issue now and forever.

Putting off real reform makes fixing the system harder and more expensive. As one Democrat leader observed recently, "Every year we delay adds at least \$600 billion to the cost of saving the system." And the Social Security trustees agree. Postponing reform will leave our children with drastic and unpleasant choices, huge tax increases that will kill jobs, massive new borrowing, or sudden, painful cuts in Social Security benefits or other programs. Our children deserve better, and we can give them better. I have told Congress all ideas are on the table, except raising the payroll tax rate. Some of the options available include indexing benefits to prices rather than wages, changing the benefit formulas, raising the retirement age—ideas Democrats and Republicans have talked about before.

Whatever changes we make, we must provide a better and stronger system for younger workers. And that is why I have proposed allowing younger Americans to place some of your payroll taxes in voluntary personal retirement accounts. You would have a choice of conservative bond and stock funds, with the opportunity to earn a higher rate of return than is possible under the current system. If you earn an average of \$35,000 over your career, you can build up nearly a quarter-million dollars in your account on top of your Social Security check. This would be real savings you own, a nest egg you could pass on to your children.

The American people did not place us in office to pass on problems to future generations and future Presidents and future