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Congressional Record S. 15212 - Social Security Increase (To Amendment Title II) S. 4001

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STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED
BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. MANSFIELD (for himself, Mr. AIKEN, Mr. SAXBE, Mr. CHURCH, Mr. ROBERT C. BYRD, Mr. CRANSTON, Mr. JACKSON, Mr. METCALF, Mr. HART, Mr. RIBICOFF, Mr. SCHWEIKER, Mr. TUNNEY, Mr. BAYH, Mr. RANDOLPH, Mr. INOUE, Mr. MONTOYA, Mr. COOK, Mr. PASTORE, Mr. MUSKIE, Mr. MAGNUSON, Mr. SPONG, Mr. BROOKE, Mr. CASE, Mr. PEARSON, Mr. BIBLE, Mr. MATHIAS, Mr. HATFIELD, Mr. WILLIAMS, Mr. NELSON, Mr. CHILES, Mr. EASTLAND, Mr. BENTSEN, Mr. ANDERSON, Mr. GRIFFIN, Mr. STAFFORD, Mr. STEVENS, Mr. WEICKER, Mr. EAGLETON, Mr. MONDALE, Mr. STEVENSON, Mr. GAMBRELL, Mr. PROXMIRE, Mr. HUMPHREY, Mr. SYMINGTON, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. GURNEY, Mr. MCINTYRE, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. BEALL, Mr. HARRIS, Mr. PERCY, Mr. BURDICK, Mr. HOLLINGS, Mr. JORDAN of North Carolina, Mr. HARTKE, Mr. COOPER, Mr. DOLE, Mr. YOUNG, Mr. SCOTT, Mr. BOGGS, Mr. TOWER, Mr. THURMOND, Mr. BAKER, Mr. ROTH, Mr. PELL, Mr. JAVITS, Mr. PACKWOOD, Mr. CANNON, Mr. MOSS, Mr. HUGHES, Mr. GRAVEL, and Mr. MCGEE):

S. 4001. A bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to provide for the liberalization and automatic adjustment in accordance with rising wage levels—of the earnings test thereunder, which provides for deductions in monthly benefits on account of excess earnings. Referred to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, for some time the distinguished senior Senator from Vermont, the ranking Member in this body, and I have discussed at breakfast the plight of our older citizens on social security. As a result of these conversations, and on behalf of the distinguished senior Senator from Vermont

(Mr. AIKEN) and myself, we introduce a bill that seeks to provide greater equity for older Americans whose subsistence is tied primarily to social security.

It does so in two major ways: First, it increases from \$1,680 to \$3,000 the outside income a social security pensioner is entitled to receive without penalty.

The second main feature would reduce the amount by which the pensioner would be penalized should his outside earnings exceed the exemption.

The total effect of this bill, Mr. President, is to bring greater relief to senior citizens—or at least to those of them who happen to be subject to the social security laws. It is in line with past efforts of the Congress to grant more equitable treatment to older Americans.

In this regard, the Senate will recall that it was the Congress, on its own initiative, that granted a full 20-percent increase in benefits to social security pensioners this year.

We therefore offer the bill in keeping with this outstanding record. All options will be reserved with respect to this matter in seeking to assure, if possible, that it becomes law before this Congress adjourns.

Mr. AIKEN. The proposal just made by the Senator from Montana, the majority leader, is long overdue. It is not right to keep people living at the poverty level or less, simply because they are entitled to social security.

I am more than glad to be a cosponsor of this proposal.

Mr. MANSFIELD. I thank the distinguished Senator from Vermont.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Does the distinguished acting Republican minority leader desire recognition?

Mr. SAXBE. At this time, Mr. President, I just would like to comment upon this effort, because it is one that is well taken at this time. It points up the grinding effect of inflation upon these people who presumed and thought they received a promise that they were buying an insurance policy. It was never intended that social security would be considered as Government support or welfare.

It was contemplated in the past, in the 1930's, that this was an actuarial system whereby they would buy protection in the form of an insurance policy. As we have advanced through the increases in the percentage of deduction of payrolls, we have reached the point, I believe, at 10 percent, where it is impractical, even impossible, to take from a workingman's salary more than 10 percent of his pay to support something which he will get in maybe 40 years, and which may be worthless, as the 1930 plan is today.

Therefore, I hope we can get away from this fiction that social security payments are actuarial and realize it is an obligation of our Government to support those people who have contributed through their lifetime to a working economy.

I think that it is long overdue, and I believe that in time it will extend to railroad retirement and to all other railroad

retirement programs that are being wrecked by runaway inflation.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. SAXBE. Yes.

Mr. MANSFIELD. The Senator has made a point which I believe cannot be emphasized too much; that is, these people have contributed to their retirement, so they have earned their way into retirement, but their dollars become of less value with the passage of time. That is a natural thing, regardless of the administration in power, and they are well under, most of them, if not all of them, the so-called poverty level as far as income is concerned.

This is one way in which a rectification can be achieved, and I am delighted that the distinguished Senator from Ohio has joined the distinguished Senator from Vermont and me in giving support to this proposal.

Mr. SAXBE. If I would be permitted, Mr. President, I would like to be a cosponsor of this bill.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CHURCH. Mr. President, I want to commend the senior Senator from Vermont and the Senator from Ohio for their sponsorship of the bill introduced by the Senator from Montana.

I ask unanimous consent that I may be joined as a cosponsor of the measure.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the distinguished assistant majority leader (Mr. ROBERT C. BYRD) also be listed as a cosponsor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. Cranston also.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I also ask unanimous consent that the distinguished Senator from Connecticut (Mr. RIBICOFF) be added as a cosponsor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ROBERT C. BYRD. Mr. President, I am pleased to join with the distinguished majority leader (Mr. MANSFIELD) and the distinguished senior Senator from Vermont (Mr. AIKEN) in cosponsoring a bill that would make more realistic the limitations placed on outside income received by social security recipients.

At present, a social security pensioner can have an outside income of \$1,680—anything more than that will result in a proportionate reduction of his social security benefits. The bill that is being introduced today raises to \$3,000 the amount of outside income a pensioner can have before he or she is penalized by a reduction in benefits. It would also reduce the penalties for persons whose outside incomes exceed the \$3,000 limit.

Congress is acutely aware of the burden that social security pensioners have had to bear over the past several years. Inflation has hit hardest at these fixed-

income citizens, making their social security benefits less than subsistence-level in many cases and driving many of our older citizens below the poverty line. Earlier this year, Congress expressed its awareness in a positive manner by granting an across-the-board 20-percent increase in social security benefits.

The bill will complement the earlier benefit increase. It is a further step toward providing equity for older Americans, granting them greater independence to supplement their retirement incomes and better enabling them to fight the spiraling inflation.

I am hopeful that Congress will continue its outstanding accord with regard to our Nation's social security recipients, and will take steps to assure that this bill is enacted into law before adjournment.