

Thinking About Privatization: An Update

Congressional Hearings

The House Ways and Means Committee, chaired by Bill Thomas (R-CA), is holding a series of hearings on “protecting and strengthening Social Security.” There have been two hearings each week, some at the full Committee level and some at the Social Security Subcommittee (chaired by Jim McCrery, R-LA) level. The Ways and Means web site, <http://waysandmeans.house.gov>, contains a great deal of hearing information including Hearing Advisories, witness lists, written statements of witnesses, and access to webcasts of the hearings. On May 17, 2005, the Social Security Subcommittee held a hearing to “examine the evolution of the Social Security safety net and its importance to vulnerable populations.” Testimony was provided by invited witnesses only. In addition to Commissioner Jo Anne Barnhart and the Government Accountability Office (GAO), a final witness panel included Marty Ford representing the Social Security Task Force of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities. NOSSCR is a member of the Task Force and signed on to Ms. Ford’s written statement. The testimony is available on the “Thinking About Privatization” link on NOSSCR’s web site, www.nosscr.org.

The Senate Finance Committee also held a hearing on May 25, 2005, “Social Security: Achieving Sustainable Solvency.” Further information is available on the Senate Finance Committee web site, www.senate.gov/~finance.

New Publications

A frequent question from the public is about options for making Social Security solvent. Several recent publications provide information and descriptions of the various options available. The National Academy of Social Insurance (NASI), a nonpartisan organization, has issued a “Social Security Brief”: *Options to Balance Social Security Funds Over the Next 75 Years* by Virginia P. Reno and Joni Lavery (Feb. 2005). The paper provides an understandable description of Social Security’s finances and long-range solvency options. Also available from NASI is *Social Security Finances: A Primer* by Virginia Reno. These and other Social Security-related publications are available on the NASI web site, www.nasi.org. Under “Key Interest Areas,” select “Social Security.” The GAO has issued a primer on Social Security reform, *Social Security Reform: Answers to Key Questions*, GAO-05-193SP (May 2005). This 70-page pamphlet discusses key topics and terms, including options. Chapter headings include:

- I. Basically, How Does Social Security Work Now?
- II. Why Is There A Need For Social Security Reform?
- III. What Are the Options for Social Security Reform?
- IV. What Are the Implications of Social Security Reform?
- V. Glossary of Key Terms

This publication is available online at: www.gao.gov/new.items/d05193sp.pdf.