



## **The Future of Social Security is Too Important to “Just Say No”**

### **Americans understand the need to fix Social Security now.**

The American public believes there is a problem facing the Social Security system.

- 69% say the problem is major or is a crisis (American ViewPoint)
- 72% say the problem is major or is a crisis (CNN/USAToday/Gallup)

The President has put a proposal on the table and made it clear that he welcomes all ideas.

The public wants Congress to work together to address the problem and offer alternatives.

- 70% say opponents of President Bush’s plan should put their own plan on the table (Zogby/CATO; 6/1/05)
- 52% say they favor allowing younger workers the choice of investing a portion of their Social Security taxes through personal accounts (Zogby/CATO; 6/1/05)

### **But Democratic leaders refuse to be part of the solution.**

**“We are not going to change Social Security as long as President Bush talks about privatization.”** – Senator Harry Reid (CNN, 6/9/05)

**“We should be careful of ANY compromise . . . . if we allow ANY of these ideas to hit a markup, it means the Republicans can make FURTHER mischief AND will be able to claim a "victory" if a bill passes, when none is needed or helpful to the country.”** – National Democratic strategist, Bob Weiner; Memo to 40 top Democratic leaders, 6/8/05.

**“Take privatization of Social Security off the table. And I can guarantee you that Senator Reid and Representative Pelosi will sit down with the President. They have told me so privately. They would be delighted to sit down.”** – DNC Chairman Howard Dean, *Meet The Press*, 5/22/05

**“Remove the poison pill of privatization, and Democrats will come to the table with our ideas, with our commitment, and with our cooperation to address the problem that exists, not a crisis, but the problem that exists in Social Security down the road.”** – House Democratic leader, Rep. Nancy Pelosi, Press Conference; 5/22/05

### **Opinion makers and editorial pages reject the “just say no” strategy**

**“Where Are the Democrats?** Failing to act now will make the problem harder to fix down the road; cuts or tax increases will have to be steeper the longer the problem goes unaddressed. Democratic lawmakers keep insisting that they take the Social Security problem seriously and want to deal with it. This seems a good time to start.” (Editorial, *Washington Post*, 6/22/05)

**“Bush's willingness to begin addressing that unpleasant reality puts pressure on Democrats to do the same.”** (Editorial, *USA Today*, 5/1/05)

“By adjusting the formula for future benefits based on income, Mr. Bush has now embraced the ‘fairness’ claims that Democrats say they hold dear. **So are they serious or not? On first response, not...**If Bill Clinton were the President proposing this, Democrats would be doing ‘fairness’ cartwheels.” (Editorial, *Wall Street Journal*, 5/2/05)

**“It’s time now for Democrats to offer some serious contribution of their own to this debate.** So far, four Social Security solvency plans are ready for Senate consideration, none authored by Democrats. Constructive criticism is one thing. Denying the numbers, stroking polls and refusing to help in catching the falling Social Security star is something else.” (Editorial, *Grand Rapids Press*, 5/8/05)

**“It will be a huge political mistake for Democrats to miss the return volley .... Democrats must do much more than just say no and lambaste the president with rhetoric.”** (Editorial, *Albuquerque Tribune*, 5/10/05)

**“But his Democratic counterparts are behaving like alienated junior professors. No productive ideas. No senses of leadership. Just half-truths from the peanut gallery.”** (David Brooks, *New York Times*, 5/08/05)

**Even former president Bill Clinton and his chief strategist, James Carville are frustrated with Democrats unwillingness to address the problem.**

**“I think the Democrats should say what they are for on Social Security in the next couple weeks; they've got time to put together a program. I think it should include an opportunity for people to participate in savings and ownership.”** – Clinton in an interview on ABC’s *Good Morning America*.

“To say there is no problem, simply puts the Democrats out of the conversation for the great majority of the country that want political leaders to secure this very important government program. **Voters are looking for reform, change and new ideas, but Democrats are stuck in concrete.**” – Democratic strategists Stan Greenberg and James Carville in a 3/2/05 memo on Social Security reform.

**Our tradition in this country is that the party in opposition offers an alternative to the major proposals by the party in power.**

#### **Alternatives Provided By Republicans**

- Health care reform (HR 2261; Rep. Thomas; 5/25/93)

#### **Alternatives Provided By Democrats**

- Medicare (S. 21 Sen. Daschle; 1/22/01; H.R. 803; Rep. Stark; 2/28/01)
- Tax cuts (S. 2679; Sen Baucus; 6/25/02; H.R. 1264; Rep. Rangel 3/28/01)
- The Budget (S.Con Res 100; Sen Conrad; 3/22/02)

**The retirement security of future generations will not be protected unless leaders of both parties come forward with real ideas and solutions.**

**Saying “no” to everything is not a solution to anything.**