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New American Viewpoint Poll Shows Growing Public Awareness of the Need For Action to Reform Social Security

69 percent believe Social Security either in a crisis or has major problems

Washington, DC – As President Bush concludes his 60-day tour to raise awareness of the need for Social Security reform, a new American Viewpoint survey shows that 69 percent of Americans believe that Social Security is in a state of crisis or has major problems.

The poll, which was commissioned by the Coalition for the Modernization and Protection of America's Social Security (CoMPASS), revealed that 18 percent believe Social Security is in a state of crisis, with 51 percent saying that the program has major problems. Another 25 percent said the program has minor problems, with only 4 percent believing that Social Security does not have any problems.

The survey also found growing concern by Americans on whether Social Security will be there for their retirement.

The new poll of 1,000 adults found that 59 percent of Americans think that Social Security will not be able to pay all the retirement benefits they are entitled to receive, while only 29 percent believe that Social Security will be able to pay for their retirement. The finding that nearly six in 10 Americans worry that Social Security will not be able to pay for their retirement is 16-point increase over the same question in a February *Newsweek* poll, when 43 percent said they did not think Social Security would be able to pay all of the retirement benefits they are owed.

“President Bush has spent the past 60 days making the case for reform, and a growing number of Americans understand that Social Security is on a path to fiscal insolvency and needs to be fixed,” said Derrick Max, executive director of CoMPASS. “And the President is now offering important new ideas for reform that can help move this process forward.”

“Those who turn a deaf ear to these appropriate and needed calls for Social Security reform are turning their backs on future generations of retirees,” Max said. “The President continues to demonstrate leadership in defining the problem and providing real solutions, while opponents are showing that they are more interested in scoring political points than trying to find a bipartisan compromise for Americans.”

The American Viewpoint poll also found an increase in support for voluntary personal retirement accounts for younger workers. The survey found that, in spite of widespread attacks by opponents, 39 percent of Americans say they support “gradually reducing the amount of money that people receive as their guaranteed Social Security benefit in exchange for allowing workers to invest some of their Social Security taxes in the stock market.” This represents a 6-point improvement over an identical question in a *Wall Street Journal* poll in January, when 33 percent favored creation of these voluntary accounts.

In addition, nearly half (48 percent) said they would choose to invest some of their Social Security money in a personal retirement account as part of Social Security reform, if given the option. Another 47 percent said they would stay with the current system. In an important finding, 56 percent of those under age 54 – the group eligible for the personal retirement accounts – said they would choose to invest if given the option.

Creation of personal retirement account options for younger workers is one of the central principles of Social Security reform for CoMPASS members. The other core principles for the broad-based coalition members are that Social Security must be put on a path to permanent solvency, that benefits must be protected for people age 55 and older and that taxes are not raised on employers or employees.

CoMPASS, the leading group advocating Social Security reform with more than 150 member associations and organizations, sponsors *Generations Together* (www.generationstogether.net), which continues to actively work on behalf of reform in 32 targeted states.

This week, CoMPASS launched a coordinated lobbying blitz to contact all 100 Senate offices about Social Security reform that supplements the campaign’s state activities over the past three months, which have included grassroots outreach and organizing, hundreds of thousands of phone calls to advocates, advertising, town hall meetings and media outreach. Reform advocates wearing the now-familiar “Fix Social Security Now!” buttons continue to be highly visible during Social Security events conducted by the President and other administration officials.

The American Viewpoint poll of 1,000 adults was conducted April 22-26. It has a margin of error of +/- 3.2%.

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Generations Together (www.generationstogether.net) is a project of the Coalition for the Modernization and Protection of America’s Social Security (CoMPASS). CoMPASS is a 501 (c)(4) with the mission of educating the public on, and advocating for, fundamental Social Security reform.