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Contact: Hannah Siemers
(202) 778-1250

New Poll Raises Serious Questions About AARP's Opposition to Fixing Social Security

*Older Americans support reforming Social Security now and providing option of
personal accounts;*

Max urges Novelli to listen to AARP membership

WASHINGTON – Three-fifths of voters age 55 and older believe that offering personal retirement accounts to younger workers is a good idea, so long as nothing changes in their own Social Security benefits, with AARP members slightly more likely to say personal accounts are a good idea than non-AARP members, according to a new poll released today.

The survey found that a commanding majority of senior voters want Congress to act now to shore up Social Security for future generations. Sixty five percent of AARP members and 66 percent of non-AARP senior voters believe significant changes are needed to ensure their children and grandchildren will get the Social Security benefits they have been promised.

By a three-to-one margin senior voters think that the current Social Security system is not financially sound and that it would be irresponsible for Congress to avoid making significant changes to the program. Most senior voters also think it would cost the country more to make changes to Social Security later than to make changes now.

These are among the new research findings that call into question whether AARP's strident opposition to Social Security reform reflects the viewpoints of its vast and politically diverse membership. The survey of 800 voters age 55 and older was released today by Ayres, McHenry & Associates.

"Older Americans of all walks of life and every political persuasion agree that Congress should fix Social Security now," said Dr. Q. Whitfield Ayres, president of Ayres, McHenry & Associates. "AARP members, in particular, are also supportive of giving younger workers the option of starting personal retirement accounts," Ayres said.

The poll was commissioned by the Coalition for the Modernization and Protection of America's Social Security (CoMPASS), sponsor of Generations Together, the leading voter education and grassroots mobilization campaign in support of Social Security reform.

Derrick Max, executive director of COMPASS, encouraged AARP to reconsider its opposition to fixing Social Security in a letter sent to Mr. William Novelli, CEO of AARP.

“This poll confirms everything we in the Generations Together campaign see at the grassroots level on a daily basis. The more seniors learn about Social Security reform, the more they like it,” wrote Max. “We hope these findings will persuade AARP to reassess its hostility to Social Security reform and to craft a policy position that better reflects the views of its membership,” Max wrote.

Last week, Max and Novelli were among the list of six national leaders who *USA Today* said will “shape the future” of Social Security.

The survey also found that AARP members are closely following the national debate on Social Security reform. Eighty three percent of AARP members say they are paying at least a fair amount of attention to the issue. Despite AARP members' intense interest in Social Security, a bare majority of them are aware of the group's position on the issue. Four out of ten AARP members say they do not know where AARP stands on Social Security.

About the Survey

The survey of 800 registered voters age 55 and older was conducted March 6-8, 2005 by Ayres, McHenry & Associates and has a margin of error of 3.46 percent. The full questionnaire and a summary of findings are available at www.generationstogether.net. To arrange an interview with Dr. Ayres, please contact Hannah Siemers at 202.778.1250.

For more information, visit www.generationstogether.net.

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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.