

GOP Survey favors Social Security cutbacks

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A survey conducted under the aegis of the conservative Bonneville County Republican Women showed strong support for cutbacks in the Social Security System if it appears in danger of going broke.

State Committeewoman Marilyn Stanger conducted the survey in which 221 questionnaires were returned out of about 600 during July and August.

Six questions were asked and the key one inquiring whether Social Security should be funded from general revenue, even if this would be certain to increase the budget deficit and increase inflation, showed 69 percent in opposition, only 10 percent in favor and 21 percent undecided or no response.

On the question of lowering the amount of benefits a person receives who retires early (ill health and supplemental security income not be included), 72.4 percent were in favor, 17.6 percent opposed and 10 percent undecided and no response.

On the question of restraining the growth of future benefits, 64 percent were in favor, 18.5 percent opposed and 17.5 percent undecided or no response.

On the question of returning the Social Security System to its primary function as an income floor for over 65 retirees, rather than continue its use as a welfare distribution program, 85 percent were in favor, 5.5 percent opposed and 9.5 percent undecided or no response.

On the proposal for raising the eligibility from 65 to 68 as the quickest means to

restore funds in the system, 56 percent were in favor, 31 percent opposed and 13 percent undecided or no response.

Whether to repeal the earning limitations, 83 percent were in favor, 11 percent opposed and 6 percent undecided or no response.

Mrs. Stanger reported the questionnaire distributions were made to the Idaho Falls Senior Citizen Center, nursing homes, retirement centers, Bonneville County Republican Women, Republican Region 7 Barbecue, and people contacted on an individual basis.

Mrs. Stanger said she was disappointed better response was not received from nursing homes and retirement center, indicating bulk of the replies came from the devout Republicans, mostly the Bonneville Republican Women and those attending the regional Republican barbecue at Tautphaus Park when Secretary of Agriculture John Block spoke.

She did say the senior citizen members turned in a good response.

How the questions were phrased also must be considered and the two important ones of the six could be open to the charge they were slanted.

For example, the first question about funding revenue, carried the notation "even if this should be certain to increase the budget deficit and dramatically increase inflation" is a speculation that is open to doubt.

The fourth question also can invite some criticism with the statement that the "Social Security System should be returned to its primary function as an

income floor, rather than continue its use as a welfare distribution program."

Many of those getting checks from Social Security to which they contributed many years and for which they will never be repaid would hardly consider themselves as recipients of "a welfare distribution program."

The other questions appeared clear-cut.

Results of the poll will be forwarded to the Idaho congressional delegation and be made available to state legislators, various federal and state agencies, and others interested, said Mrs. Stanger, who contributed time, money and effort in the survey.

Mrs. Stanger, who was appointed by Sen. Steve Symms to attend the White House Conference on Aging at Washington in late November, prepared and distributed the questionnaires.

Mrs. Stanger and Mrs. Yoshie Ochi, also a Bonneville Republican Women member, who was appointed by Gov. John V. Evans, will both attend the White House Conference on Aging.

Some of the comments follow:

On Question 1 (fund from general revenues): "This is a leading question," "Social Security is not a drop in government obligation." "Cut government employees pay and individual allowance."

On Question 2 (lower benefits): "I am on Social Security; however, my wife is young and stands to lose spouse's benefits." "Benefits have been earned and it is not right to steal them from the person

who had paid." "Every effort should be made by the government to repay the Social Security benefits that people—especially young people—have invested in it."

On Question 3 (restrain growth): "Don't cut the lowest paid who have contributed for a lifetime." "The government should be held accountable for its mismanagement and for changing the original function."

On Question 4 (return to original function) "Welfare distribution is the cause problem." "Phase out the system and allow people a choice of how to provide for their old age." "Start making plans to allow for choosing own system of retirement."

On Question 5 (raise eligibility age): "You know many contributors that never got anything out of Social Security?"

On Question 6 (repeal earning limits): "I don't believe in paying for other people's children education, you work until you drop dead." "Turn fund over private trusts to invest and administer." "You are penalized for working but rewarded for other income." "Restrict it to the ones who paid into it."

Mrs. Stanger reported a number of other general comments were given, some leaving the boxes blank and making wry comments.

Some of the suggestions were to the effect for revamping Social Security to make it fiscally responsible; that it should be maintained for the elderly and retired citizen but on a sound fiscal basis.