

*A Modest Legislative Proposal:
The Story Of The “Protecting Future
Generations Act”*

Zachary Bernstein
University Honors
Adam Tamashasky
Fall 2011

From: travis@travis.house.gov
To: bwills@planetmail.com
Date: Tuesday, May 10 1:19 p.m.
Subject: Big News!

Brendan, how are you? Apologies for not getting back to you sooner, but this week has been a major roller coaster. You read about the votes - we struck out on some big ones recently. Then, of course, there was the funeral. I actually just got back to work. It's been a tough time, you can imagine. Thank God for Emily. She really got me through this. But it was still tough. Actually, that's part of the reason why I'm writing.

I had a pretty big idea fairly recently. You and me go back a ways, so I just had to tell you about it. I just stumbled upon this little essay a few days ago. Written by a Brit, as it turns out, back in the 1700s. Maybe you've heard of him - the name Jonathan Swift ring a bell? It sure hadn't for me, but apparently, the man was actually pretty well-known. You learn something new every day, I guess.

I'm reading this thing, and I'll tell you, the man was making some pretty tough points. Something about selling kids for food. I admit, it was pretty rough, and I couldn't help but wonder how he was going to sell something like that politically. But the more I read it, the more I was wondering if this guy wasn't on to something.

Now, I don't mean eating people. That's a bridge too far. Constituents wouldn't be happy about that, even with the mood as it is. But I was thinking, why does all this seem a little familiar? Where have I heard this one before? And then it hit me. Remember a little while back, when that health care bill came up? People were saying it had death panels in it or something? And yeah, I know they weren't too popular, but that had to be in the execution of the thing. If we give people a choice, a way out of facing the panels, that's got to go over better. There's a right way it could work.

It makes perfect sense! It's old news that Social Security and Medicare are ripping a hole in the budget. What I'm hearing from people I know in the CBO, their next report is going to be a doozy - that's off the record, naturally. But try telling Republicans to raise revenue to fix it. And try telling that liberal hippie running our side that there are going to have to be changes to the formulas. Some things Congress still can't work together on. But what if I could do something about that without messing any of those things up? Wouldn't that be something to take back home? Picture the ads - "the man who saved entitlements for generations." I like the sound of that. And it would be true. It would be the first thing Congress did right in, maybe, forever. We show we can get stuff done, and make sure these programs will stay strong.

Maybe we could throw this writer out there as the inspiration. Win the literary types over that way, get some really eloquent people behind us. And all we'd have to do for the Republicans is promise no tax hikes in the bill. They'll eat that stuff up. You make this a bipartisan thing, a bipartisan thing on *entitlements*, no less...can you imagine how good that's going to look?

Brendan, I know you've got some people around you that you can use to swing some votes. I need you to back me up on this one. Don't forget, you still owe me a favor. All I'm asking is that you sell it to your people and see if we can't get some big hitters on board to sell this around the Hill.

Get back to me as soon as you can. Give my love to Ashley and the kids.

-Henry

From: bwills@planetmail.com
To: travis@travis.house.gov
Date: Tuesday, May 10 3:25 p.m.
Subject: RE: Big News!

Good to hear from you earlier, Henry! Glad to hear the job's still suiting you well.

I've taken your idea to some friendly ears around the office. They're thinking that this could work out as well as you've hoped, and they might be willing to play some connections. I feel confident we can get a few dozen people on board, once the dominos start to fall. But the people here in the office do have some concerns about how we're going to get this through the House.

Obviously, the fact that we're talking about seniors makes the whole issue a little thorny. Remember, they can still vote, and the general opinion around here is that they won't be too pleased with this legislation. If you don't get it passed with a lot of votes, and I mean A LOT of votes backing you up, you could be vulnerable in November. Not to mention we'd probably get some bad press. No outside group wants their fingerprints on something that crashed and burned. If we're going to look like we're playing inside politics, we'd need to know it will get a lot of people on board. It needs to look grassroots.

I was wondering how many connections you've made across the aisle. Didn't you work on some transportation bill with some Republican from up north? If you can show off some goodwill with the other side, it'd go a long way towards convincing the rest of my group to jump in and help push it through.

Ashley's been absolutely dying to see you again. Any chance you could join us for dinner sometime soon?

Brendan Wills
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(202) 555-1729

From: klewis@leblanc.house.gov
To: apeters@travis.house.gov
Date: Wednesday, May 11 4:12 p.m.
Subject: RE: Meeting with Rep. LeBlanc

Andrew-

My boss would be open to a meeting with yours on Friday morning, around 11:00, in our office. He's asked Frank Lewis, his Chief of Staff, to attend as well (hope that's not a problem for you guys). He asked me to say that he enjoyed working with Rep. Travis on the transportation bill, and he's definitely open to working with him on the entitlement issue as well. He sounds like he's really looking forward to this one. I think he's sensing the same thing your boss is.

Let me know if this works on your end.

Karl Lewis
Chief Scheduling Coordinator
Office of The Honorable Rep. William LeBlanc of Minnesota
U.S. House of Representatives

From: apeters@travis.house.gov
To: klewis@leblanc.house.gov
Date: Wednesday, May 11 5:04 p.m.
Subject: RE: Meeting with Rep. LeBlanc

Karl-

Works out great on our end. My guy is looking forward to it as well. Totally understand about inviting people to sit in - I'll be there as well, although please remind Congressman LeBlanc that we should keep it small to avoid leaks. Congressman Travis was sure he'd understand that.

Andrew Peters
Chief of Staff
Office of The Honorable Rep. Henry Travis of Texas
U.S. House of Representatives

From: leblanc@leblanc.house.gov
To: travis@travis.house.gov
Date: Friday, May 13 5:29 p.m.
Subject: Re our meeting

Henry-

I have to say, I walked out of our meeting today somewhat uncertain about how I would come down on this. On the one hand, you're absolutely right that this problem badly needs a solution. On the other, even as bold solutions go, yours does seem to pose some potential pitfalls, to say the least.

To be honest with you, I was very close to turning you down during the meeting. I understood your arguments about the political climate, but I was just feeling very much in doubt about the whole thing.

But then, wouldn't you know it, right after I walked out of the meeting, I got a call from my youngest son, Jack. I swear, it couldn't have been more than thirty seconds after I walked out the door. He's home sick with a cold, poor kid, and I promised him to make sure he'd check in with me from time to time. He might be a bit old for that, I suppose, but you know how fathers can be sometimes.

The more I talked with him, the more I thought about the kind of world I want to leave behind for him. That's why I got into politics in the first place, to make sure things were better than I found them. I suppose that's why most people do, at first, anyway. The timing of all this - my chief of staff, Frank, you know he's not really that religious, but he was telling me that maybe it was divine intervention or something. I'm not sure if he believed it or what. I'm not sure I do. But the more I thought about the discussion, the more I understood where you were coming from on this.

Sometimes, doing the necessary thing is hard. You were right about that. Maybe that's the test we all face during our lives. Having to fight our way through that doubt that we can actually make this kind of change happen. But I suppose the most drastic changes in the world have almost never been that easy.

I promised when I got elected that I would work as hard as I could to solve our nation's problems. That's just about all I'm good for right now. And if this is my only chance, I guess I have to make the most of it.

So I'll join in. I'll sponsor the bill with you, and we'll see just how far this takes us. You tell me what you want me to do, and I'll be there for it.

-Rep. William LeBlanc

Updated Long-Term Projections for Social Security

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO), under a mandate from Congress, has developed a new report on the future of Social Security. Due to recent economic and technical revisions that were not present when our previous report was filed, our results have changed significantly.

CBO projects that under the current situation the program will exhaust the trust funds within a period of no more than two years. After the trust funds are exhausted, Social Security spending cannot exceed annual revenues. Currently, the benefits being paid out are 35% lower than the scheduled benefits. If and when the trust funds are exhausted, that imbalance will widen.

While the fiscal issues with Social Security are by no means a new or unknown issue, they have been exacerbated by many economic factors that have proven more intractable than CBO previously projected. Among them is a persistently high unemployment rate, which has simultaneously reduced revenues well below the projected rate (see Figure 1-4) and appears to have driven more elderly Americans to begin collecting benefits immediately, presumably to improve their personal economic situations (see Figure 1-5). Simply put, as the number of Americans receiving benefits rises, the number of Americans supporting the program through payroll taxes has not risen at nearly the same rate.

Without that changing, any policy solutions will have to be that much more severe. CBO's projections are made based on assumptions that the status quo is maintained. Any policy options designed to increase employment could improve revenues from the payroll tax in the short-run, but CBO projects that short-term economic stimulus in the vein of programs enacted in 2009 will not be able to do more than delay the program's insolvency (see Figure 3-1). CBO also projects that further cuts in benefits could likely not relieve the program's fiscal imbalance, as benefits have already been decreased in previous budgets (see Figure 3-3), leaving little opportunity for further cuts, particularly given the severity of the program's budget deficits.

Any remaining options would likely have to involve either increases in other sources of revenue or cuts to other programs, with the benefits of those actions reallocated to the Social Security trust fund. Projections on any actions Congress proposes will follow as they are announced.

CONCERN GROWS OVER SOCIAL SECURITY, MEDICARE INSTABILITY

Miami (Sretuer News Agency) - Ask 56-year-old truck driver Eric Robards what his biggest concern is, and he won't tell you that it's job security, or lack of health insurance, or even how to help his children pay for college. Financially, his family is secure.

For now, that is. Robards is worried about what will happen in the next six years.

"My family is going to rely on my Social Security benefits," Robards said over coffee in a downtown Miami restaurant. "My paycheck is enough to get us by right now, but I can't do this job for the rest of my life, even if I wanted to. And I'm really concerned that it won't be there when we need it."

Social Security and Medicare, which have faced deficits or the threat of insolvency for years, are in far poorer health than previously anticipated. In 2005, the Congressional Budget Office, or CBO, anticipated that Social Security would first see payouts exceed revenues in 2020, and that it would run out of its trust funds in 2052. The most recent reports, released to the public on Wednesday, have shifted the date on which the program will run out of money to within two years if nothing is done. Medicare is expected to be unable to pay its bills within about ten months.

That would leave Robards, and potentially millions of Americans, scrambling to figure out how to close the gaps.

"People often plan their retirement with an eye towards, how much money will I be getting every month to complement what I've saved?" said financial planner Alvin Thompson. "They base a lot on that. People decide when to retire based on the fact that they can get more money per month if they do. This will turn a lot of people's plans upside down."

The problems for Social Security and Medicare are many, but the biggest issue is the steadily growing number of retirees who are now taking benefits. With health care costs still rising, Medicare has seen its bottom line hit even harder, but both of the programs are not taking in enough money in payroll taxes to be able to pay out full benefits to the millions of Americans reaching the age of eligibility.

"As the number of Americans receiving benefits rises, the number of Americans supporting the program through payroll taxes has not risen at nearly the same rate," the CBO's report read in part. "Without that changing, any policy solutions will have to be that much more severe."

Congress has been debating what to do to fix Social Security and Medicare's finances since the report was released, but so far, nothing has been proposed which would be able to solve

the program's fiscal woes. Robards sees this as more partisan bickering and wonders if Congress actually understands what people like him are facing.

"Honestly, at this point, I almost don't care what kind of solutions they come up with, as long as they work," Robards said. "They just need to stop fighting and come up with something. A lot of people I know are scared to death that they won't get their benefits when they need them. They need to understand how worried we are. They need to stop pandering to the people who are set with their benefits and start thinking about those of us who are going to lose them."

Political leaders on both sides of the aisle have promised solutions are coming. Political analysts are concerned that those solutions will be harder to come by.

"Even if they are coming up with sure-fire ways to balance the program out, you're talking about the third rail of American politics," said David Barnes, a former member of the CBO, now a professor at National University in Washington. "Yes, seniors aren't the big political force they used to be, and people are starting to look at them as a major cause of the problem. Still, it's going to be very hard for a lot of people to give up things they really don't want to. If you cut benefits, if you raise payroll taxes, if you hike the retirement age, you're making somebody mad. Any real solution is going to have to just take that risk, and I'm not sure anybody out there is willing to."

Robards isn't interested in that. He just wants to know that the programs he was expecting to benefit from will be there for him.

"People keep saying, don't call them entitlement programs, but really, we are entitled to them," Robards added. "We've paid in our whole lives. I worked two jobs to get by for a while. Social Security isn't in trouble because of me. I'm not taking anything from them right now. I'm still paying in. It's the people getting those benefits right now, they're the reason we're here. I don't want to sound selfish, but I do think I'm entitled. I'm as entitled as they are. Probably more than they are."

H.R. 666

To require the Social Security Administration and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to form a government panel to determine which individual senior citizens should be subject to government-mandated end-of-life procedures.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MR. TRAVIS of Texas (for himself, and MR. LEBLANC of Minnesota) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Ways and Means

A BILL

To require the Social Security Administration and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to form a government panel to determine which individual senior citizens should be subject to government-mandated end-of-life procedures.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE

This act may be cited as the “Protecting Future Generations Act.”

SEC 2. CREATION OF “QUIETUS PANELS”

The Social Security Administration (hereinafter referred to as “SSA”) and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (“CMMS”) shall require --

(a) That all persons collecting Social Security and/or Medicare benefits shall be noted by use of date of birth or Social Security number in official databases; and

(b) That all persons, within ninety (90) days after reaching the age of seventy-five (75), be required by law to either--

- (1) Agree to full cessation of benefits from both Social Security and Medicare, or
- (2) Allow for submission to a panel of medical experts, to be determined by the heads of both agencies in concert.

(c) That the heads of the SSA and CMMS shall each select six members for the panel provided for in Sec. 2 (b)(2). The panel--

- (1) Shall be referred to as a “Quietus Panel.”
- (2) Shall determine, based on an individual’s age, income, current employment situation, number of dependents under said individual’s care, and first- and third-person testimony, whether individuals should be remanded for end-of-life action.
- (3) Shall secure and undertake as necessary humane end-of-life action for individuals deemed worthy of remand.
- (4) Shall be replicated as deemed necessary by the heads of the SSA and CMMS to handle increased volume of cases.

SEC. 3 CREATION OF “LOSS PREVENTION” TASK FORCE

The State Department (hereinafter referred to as “State”) shall require --

- (a) That all persons at the age of 70 surrender their passports, and
- (b) That all persons at the age of 70 may not travel outside of the country without the consent of State, and
- (c) That a “Loss Prevention” Task Force be created to ensure that Americans who are at the age of 70 and abroad be returned to the United States with the cooperation of foreign governments.

LEGISLATION: GIVE UP ENTITLEMENT BENEFITS OR FACE “QUIETUS PANEL”

Washington, DC (US Press) - A bill proposed by two Congressmen would require that Americans forfeit their Social Security and Medicare benefits by age 75 or face what some critics are calling death panels reincarnated.

Under the legislation, titled the “Protecting Future Generations Act,” seniors who agreed to forego benefits from either or both programs would not have to face a “Quietus Panel,” which is described in the bill as “a government board determining an individual’s level of contribution to society,” and which would have the power to recommend euthanasia to individuals not meeting the board’s criteria. Anyone who refused to give up their benefits would have to come before such a panel at age 75.

“While this bill is a dramatic solution, we feel that the dire situation facing our entitlement programs demands such a solution,” a joint statement from Reps. Henry Travis (D-TX) and William LeBlanc (R-MN), the co-sponsors of the bill, read in part. “As nobody else has yet proposed a solution that can pass both houses of Congress, we have decided to shoot particularly high in the hopes that this crisis can be averted.”

Reaction was mixed, perhaps surprising considering the bill’s provisions.

“Whether this is a stunt designed to get two low-ranking members some attention, or an actual attempt to solve the crisis, it’s beyond outrageous,” said Senator Tobias Johnson (D-UT). “My sincerest hope is that it’s the former, because we are straying onto some very dangerous ground here. We’re talking about death panels all over again, and this time, it’s actually happening.”

Sen. Johnson was referring to a debate over the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, a health care bill passed in 2010. That debate featured accusations that the legislation would feature “death panels,” a charge which was demonstrated to be false. The section in question would have required people to have discussions with doctors about end-of-life issues. It was dropped from the final bill.

However, some other members, who would not speak on the record, privately noted that this bill could easily appeal to much of the body’s membership, most noting that the legislation would not require either cuts in benefit formulas or eligibility, or tax increases.

Representatives Travis and LeBlanc appeared, based on their joint statement, to be serious about passing the legislation.

“This bill will give our nation’s seniors ample time to prepare a financial reserve so losing their benefits does not impact their retirement so severely,” the statement read. “It will

ensure that they can still spend time with their families. And it will drastically reduce the amount of money flowing out of the coffers of these two venerable programs, preserving them for future generations.”

“Maybe these guys are actually onto something here,” one congressional aide said, speaking on condition of anonymity. “We’ve gotten a lot of calls around here from younger people concerned that they won’t have these benefits when it’s time for them to retire. There’s, frankly, a lot of anger at the older generation right now for putting their benefits in jeopardy.” The aide said there had not been a large amount of calls yet about this bill, but he expected that to change quickly.

“With a bill like this, people will be calling in droves. My guess would be that you’ll hear quite a few people saying that this is something they’ll support,” the aide said.

Currently, the legislation does not list any co-sponsors other than Reps. Travis and LeBlanc. Some members of Congress hinted that they might be open to joining as co-sponsors, depending on the direction of the debate in coming days.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has yet to review the bill or determine exactly how much it could save. Recent reports from the nonpartisan federal agency have predicted that Social Security will become insolvent within two years, and Medicare in ten months time.

“The fact that people aren’t calling for the heads of these congressmen indicates how serious the situation is,” said Perry Brooks, a Democratic strategist. “It’s absolutely unbelievable, when you think about it. That this kind of bill, of all things, could maybe actually turn into our best hope for saving these programs.”

The bill is H.R. 666. A spokesman for Rep. Travis clarified that the bill number, which is considered by some to be the number associated with the Devil, was not their decision.

“That is purely coincidental,” the spokesman, Rick Hentley, said. “We’re not interested in dramatizing something as silly as that. That sort of thing doesn’t help our cause. This bill is purely about attacking the biggest problem facing our entitlement programs - too many seniors collecting benefits.”

Rep. Walsh supports H.R. 666

May 30th, 6:56 PM

Bill would provide lasting fix to Social Security, Medicare

Washington, DC - Congressman Ron Walsh (D-NE) announced tonight that he would become a co-sponsor of H.R. 666, the "Protecting Future Generations Act."

Congressman Walsh issued the following statement on his decision:

"I applaud Congressmen Travis and LeBlanc for working together to create a bold, bipartisan solution to the dire fiscal straits facing these two venerable programs. They have shown true leadership, and I am proud to announce that I will sign onto their bill as a co-sponsor.

"Nobody can deny, especially with the most recent Congressional Budget Office report, that the future of Social Security and Medicare are at grave risk. What my constituents have been telling me is that they do not want the benefits they have worked and sacrificed for put in jeopardy. I pledge this to my constituents: I will not let that happen, so help me God.

"The solution offered by these two men is bold. Some might argue it goes too far. But when we are faced with a crisis like this, half-measures will not solve the problem. That is why I support this bill - because it will provide a strong, lasting solution to the entitlement crisis. My constituents have told me this is what they want to see from this body, and I intend to give them what they want.

"Those who have years of work ahead of them can rest assured that their benefits will be protected, without requiring further cuts in benefits to make up the difference. And those beginning to collect benefits now will have a substantial amount of time to prepare a financial cushion.

"We are in a period of crisis. It is in the toughest times that Americans have always responded best. We can keep that tradition going here. But this response will require those citizens who have been spared up until this point to help. Younger Americans, like the ones who have been calling into my office nonstop, have done their fair share. It is time to ask the rest of the country to join in.

"I look forward to working with Congressmen Travis and LeBlanc, and call on other members of Congress to sign onto this legislation as well. We can make this a truly transformational moment in American history, but only if we do it together. Together, we can preserve these programs, and keep America shining in its rightful place as a beacon to the world. That is what I intend to do."

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Time For Some Immodest Proposals

By: Sarah Fellowes

This is probably not what Jonathan Swift had in mind.

When the Irish author published his famous satire, “A Modest Proposal,” in 1729, he didn’t actually think it was a good idea to use babies as a food source and economic panacea. The point of that essay was to point out the flaws in the debate over his country’s many woes.

That’s all well and good. But at some point, it becomes less helpful just to hold a mirror up to society. When a crisis arises, talk is cheap. On the other hand, inaction gets expensive.

A couple of Congressmen seem to have come to that very conclusion. That would be Henry Travis and William LeBlanc, of two very different states - Texas and Minnesota - and two most certainly different parties. A piece of legislation they recently introduced, the “Protecting Future Generations Act,” has been making waves since its introduction.

According to Travis, who introduced the bill, the inspiration was, partly, none other than Mr. Swift. “The idea was pretty tough,” he said in a press conference after the bill was introduced. “But it occurred to me that sometimes, the tough choices are the ones that can do the most good.”

Of course, this means that one of the bill’s sponsors doesn’t understand satire, which is a little troubling. That being said, the opinion that members of Congress aren’t the sharpest tools in the shed hasn’t exactly been a minority view for some time now.

It isn’t hard to understand why he cited Swift, considering the central provision of the bill would be that senior citizens would have to give up all of their Social Security and Medicare benefits by age 75 or face what the bill calls “Quiet Panels,” but what critics say are the mythical “Death Panels” from 2009 actually put into legislative form.

It is definitely not a proposal put forward because it’s a safe bet, politically speaking. Americans’ views of senior citizens notwithstanding, this is a bill which would kill people. And so you can imagine the surprise of many - not all, but most - in Washington’s political circles when the bill took on sixty-eight co-sponsors in the House within a week. Most recently, there have been

rumblings from more than a few Senators who say they'd be willing to introduce the bill in the upper chamber if it gets past the House.

It still has its detractors. Something featuring this dramatic a change to two very popular programs is inevitably going to end up that way.

But Travis has one thing right. The hardest choices can do the most good.

Budget experts examining the bill have found that it would cut outlays significantly. The most optimistic projections would see both programs going back into the black within a year, but basically every review puts them back in good health at some point, something that can't be promised based on their current paths. That's also something that its detractors just can't find a way to argue against, besides reminding people, over and over again, that it will kill seniors. It would appear that Americans are at that point where they just really aren't that into Gramps.

Somewhat strangely, despite being a bold proposal, it appears to appeal to partisans on both sides. Republicans have released statements praising the fact that this bill would not raise taxes to pay close the entitlement programs' deficits. Democrats are ecstatic that they'll be able to guarantee these programs will exist for their younger voters, who they were once at risk of losing in droves. And since every other effort to save these programs has ended up as more gridlock, that's nothing short of amazing.

Something that amazing almost makes you want to support the bill just because it apparently has magical powers of reconciliation.

But the best reason to support the bill is because it's the first real act of political courage to come out of Washington in some time, or at least the first one in some time that has an outside chance of succeeding. Considering that these two programs would basically have become shadows of themselves in a couple of years, you have to give these two Congressmen credit. They actually seem to understand, as a joint statement from the two read, "that the dire situation facing our entitlement programs demands such a [dramatic] solution."

Give these guys credit. They're doing something about it.

Even if one of them doesn't know what the definition of satire is.

RETIREE GROUP: BILL WOULD KILL ELDERLY

Statement seen by critics as way to deflect questions over group's fundraising methods

Washington, DC (US Press) - The American Retirees Group (ARG), once a leading advocate for the rights of the elderly, has released a statement blasting a House bill that would require some seniors to be put to death at age 75.

The bill, the "Protecting Future Generations Act," is "the most grievous assault, physically or politically, on any one group of Americans in our nation's history," the statement read in part.

"Why Congress is even considering this horrific legislation, we cannot possibly imagine," it continued. "We call on every single member of Congress to repudiate this legislation and apologize to our nation's seniors immediately."

The legislation would require seniors to either forfeit their Social Security and Medicare benefits or face what are being called "Quietus Panels" at age 75.

The group has faced controversy recently over its methods for seeking donations. Critics have alleged that some of the group's officers have unethically persuaded many elderly people, some with conditions such as Alzheimer's, to bequeath large amounts of money to the group in their wills. ARG's officers have vehemently denied the accusations, with many calling them "baseless" and "near-criminal lies."

A spokesman for one of the legislation's chief sponsors, Rep. Henry Travis (D-TX), replied that the congressman had not yet read the statement, but added, "I think we should expect nothing less from a group that should be called the American Rip-Off Group."

The organization, once claiming as many as 40 million members, has since seen its membership fall to less than 900,000 in recent months after the allegations first surfaced in a National Inquisitor article last December. A federal investigation launched in response to the claims is due to release its report in September.

**SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION DEPUTY CHIEF GREG SAMPLES
PREPARED TESTIMONY FOR SUBCOMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SECURITY
JUNE 17**

Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee,

I am here today to offer my agency's opinion on the recently submitted "Protecting Future Generations Act," which rests before this subcommittee.

This legislation would direct the Social Security Administration, and the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, to form "Quietus Panels" in order to determine whether senior citizens should be remanded for what is called "end of life action."

As the Congressional Budget Office reported, the problems facing the Social Security Administration can be attributed to two root causes: A higher unemployment rate, which decreases the number of Americans contributing payroll taxes to these programs; and a rapidly increasing number of Americans signing up to receive benefits. At the risk of sounding overly dramatic, these events have caused a perfect storm that is threatening our program.

While our preferred option would be that Congress work to cut the unemployment rate, and thus increase our revenues, it is our opinion that a massive governmental effort would be required to put Social Security in particular on a sound, long-term fiscal footing. We are concerned that no such action on that issue will be forthcoming.

From purely a fiscal standpoint, the bill under discussion today would do much to balance our budget. However, we are beyond concerned about how this would be achieved. As the legislation itself notes, our agency, and the agency overseeing Medicare, would be required to dictate, quite literally, who lives and who dies. How this body could require us to undertake such an effort is very nearly beyond comprehension.

Legally, we doubt very much that such an effort could even be considered legal, putting aside the general, but broad, moral concerns of members of the agency, some of whom might be required to take part in these panels. Concerns about agency-wide morale would have to be addressed, and considering the kind of responsibilities they would have to face, I am not sanguine about being able to resolve those concerns.

It is the opinion of our agency's board, and of nearly every member of the agency I have spoken with about this legislation, that this would be the blackest of marks, not just on our agency but on our nation's honor. I urge you, on behalf of the entire agency and its employees, to reject it.

SOCIAL SECURITY CHIEF ACCUSED OF “GROSS MISMANAGEMENT”

Washington, DC (US Press) - Members of a House subcommittee on Social Security blasted the program as being run by “an incompetent, bumbling mess of a man” who “ran the program into the ground with more efficiency than any effort government has ever undertaken.”

The most recent hearing of the House Subcommittee on Social Security grew increasingly testy after testimony by the Deputy Chief of the Social Security Administration, Greg Samples, criticizing the “Protecting Future Generations Act.” The bill would require seniors to give up their Social Security and Medicare benefits or face a “Quietus Panel” which would be able to mark them for euthanasia.

Samples, in prepared remarks, questioned the bill’s legality, and argued that members of the agency he represented had “general, but broad, moral concerns” about implementation of the bill.

“How this body could require us to undertake such an effort is very nearly beyond comprehension,” Samples added.

Members of the subcommittee, in their remarks, very commonly accused the people in charge of the agency of causing, at least in part, the program’s fiscal insecurity.

“We are hearing remarks today from an agency which is run by an incompetent, bumbling mess of a man,” said Rep. Sam Walters (R-ID). “This man’s opinion, the opinion of the agency he oversees, is in my opinion, very deeply flawed and not worth a thing.”

Others echoed the sentiment, despite Samples’ testimony claiming that the program’s fiscal imbalance has been caused primarily by factors beyond their control. Samples argued, based on a Congressional Budget Office report released in May, that a pair of factors - high unemployment and thus lower payroll taxes, as well as more retirees collecting benefits - created what he called “a perfect storm that is threatening” the program.

“The entire government has had to deal with some budgetary problems recently,” said Rep. Thomas LaRoche (R-LA). “But the depth of the hole Social Security has to dig out of is so great that it couldn’t have been done just because of a drop in revenues or an increase in spending. It doesn’t add up.”

“Something smells rotten here,” LaRoche continued. “It looks to me as if the bureaucrats in charge of this program have ran the program into the ground with more efficiency than we have come to expect from government trying to do something right.”

Even Democrats on the subcommittee, who have been more protective of Social Security in the past, criticized the program’s management.

“I want Social Security and Medicare to keep existing,” Democratic Rep. Bill Hampton (D-ME), the ranking Democrat on the subcommittee, said in his prepared remarks. “I am prepared to do whatever is necessary to keep these programs strong, so that all hardworking Americans across this great land will be able to enjoy what was promised to them. People are concerned about this and they are telling us they want a solution to be reached quickly. I am just not sure that the people in charge of keeping the programs strong have as much interest in that as I do, or are capable of solving the problem.”

When the focus turned to questioning Mr. Samples, the rhetoric did not change.

“What sort of things would you say the program could have done better in your tenure, sir?” Rep. LaRoche asked during his allotted time.

“As I said, sir, much of the program’s instabilities were not caused by mismanagement,” Samples began, before he was cut off by Rep. LaRoche, who asked him three more times to “answer the question I asked you.”

Finally, apparently out of frustration, Mr. Samples replied, “We did do one thing wrong. We should have asked Congress for funding for a crystal ball.” Samples was then reminded by the subcommittee chair, Rep. Martin Higgins (R-MA), that “civil testimony is expected in this chamber.”

Some more sympathetic questions did come from Democrats on the panel.

“Is there any other reasonable way for Social Security to get its fiscal house in order, other than this bill?” asked Rep. Martha Pryor (D-CA).

“The question in my mind is not whether this is the best option,” Mr. Samples replied, “but whether this is a morally acceptable one. The answer to that question must be no.”

“Are there any other options?” Rep. Pryor asked again.

“As far as I am aware, nothing more substantive has been proposed yet,” Mr. Samples replied. “I would urge Congress to work to discover another solution.”

“The problem, sir,” Rep. Pryor responded, “is that people can’t wait for that. We need to act now, and this is the only proposal we have. And if we can’t propose anything else, people may decide this is the only chance we have.”

SCHUYSTER POLLING COMPANY HOUSTON, TEXAS

Poll Results Show Americans Overwhelmingly In Favor Of H.R. 666, The “Protecting Future Generations Act”

The Schuyster Polling Company, a leading public policy polling organization, today released its findings on the “Protecting Future Generations Act,” a piece of legislation designed to improve the fiscal situation of Social Security and Medicare by requiring seniors to give up their benefits at age 75 or face a “Quietus Panel” to decide whether they should be remanded for end-of-life procedures.

Its findings indicate that Americans strongly support this bill. The polling results released by Schuyster show that 91% of Americans approve of the bill, with 8% opposed and 1% having formed no opinion.

When asked for their opinion on the main cause of the entitlement programs’ recent funding issues, 87% of those surveyed believe that the growing numbers of retirees is the primary cause. 11% blame mismanagement by the heads of the agencies as the biggest problem. Americans’ opinions of the elderly have dipped dramatically - only 32% say they think of elderly citizens in general “favorably,” while 65% have an unfavorable view.

Americans also believe that the program will work as a “silver bullet” to bring both programs back to profitability. 88% of Americans believe that both programs will be running budget surpluses “fairly soon” if the legislation passes, while 10% do not. The Congressional Budget Office has projected that the bill would result in both Social Security running budget surpluses within 14 months, and Medicare within 19. Americans are concerned that, without action, their benefits will be put at risk - 92% say they are “worried,” either “very” (52%) or “somewhat” (40%), that their benefits will be put at risk if no action is taken.

The poll’s results show that Americans are paying a large amount of attention to this legislation’s passage. 76% say they are following the bill “closely,” with another 11% saying they are paying “fairly close” attention, and 13% replying that they are “not following this closely.”

The poll was taken from June 12-14, with a survey size of 1,001 randomly selected Americans. The margin of error is +/- 3 points.

TWO SURVEYS SHOW SUPPORT FOR ENTITLEMENT BILL

Polling organization still under fire for “laughable” procedures

Washington, DC (US Press) - Two polls released today show that most Americans support passage of the “Protecting Future Generations Act,” a bill that would require seniors to give up their Social Security and Medicare benefits at age 75 or face a “Quietus Panel” and possibly be remanded for end-of-life procedures.

A New York Enquirer poll shows that 54% of Americans want to see that bill passed by Congress, with 43% opposed. Another poll, conducted by the Washington Herald-Examiner and the National Broadcasting Service (NBS), had support at 56% with 42% opposed. Both of those polls were taken using 1,000 randomly selected Americans, with a 3% margin of error.

The results come as another polling organization, the Schuyster Polling Company of Houston, Texas, is under fire for its recent poll, which claimed that 91% of Americans approved of the bill. The poll has been almost universally criticized for poor polling methods.

The criticisms of the Schuyster poll have been focused on question wording. One question in the poll asked, “Do you support or oppose efforts to reign in out-of-control entitlement spending on senior citizens?” Another asked, “Do you believe that senior citizens are the greatest threat to this country at this time?”

“The way they did this poll, it’s absolutely laughable,” said Alexander Burrows, polling analyst at Richards and Tillman Polling Solutions. “You have to ask, did they just not think anyone would look at how they did it? Any poll with one-sided results like that, people are going to look at it. And anyone with any knowledge of how to do a poll will call out a methodology like that. It’s either a complete lack of foresight or massive stupidity.

“You know what?” Burrows added. “It was probably both. It’s not even like they needed to put out a poll that shows people like this. There have been plenty of those. The bill is getting tons of support from all over the political world.”

Recently, the head of the company, Rex Masters, was revealed to have been a major campaign donor to the bill’s sponsor, Rep. Henry Travis (D-TX), having given Travis \$5,000 in both of his congressional campaigns. A spokesman for Rep. Travis has emphatically denied that Travis had anything to do with this poll, or has any sort of relationship with Masters.

“He actually has tried to contact us and ask if he could get some sort of position with this office in the past,” the spokesman, Rick Hentley, told a press conference. “Someone who gives some money and wants something in return for it. The congressman has never considered it, not for a second. It takes more than five thousand dollars to get a position in this office.”

The bill number is H.R. 666.

Letter Regarding H.R. 666 - The "Protecting Future Generations Act"

Release Date: Wednesday, June 22nd

TO THE SPEAKER AND MINORITY LEADER OF THE HOUSE, AND SENATE MAJORITY AND MINORITY LEADERS:

The U.S. National Business Council, the business group representing nearly 1 million mostly small- and medium-sized companies across the country, writes to urge your support of the House bill H.R. 666, the "Protecting Future Generations Act," currently before the full Ways and Means Committee. This bill represents the best effort to date to seriously reform Social Security and Medicare and put them on a more secure footing. The Council calls on you, and the members of your caucuses, to pass this legislation as quickly as possible.

The National Business Council has long supported efforts to reform Social Security and Medicare. We have noted in the past that entitlement spending has grown by an unsustainable amount, at least in part due to more Americans reaching retirement age. Moreover, this number of retiring Americans cannot be supported by the current number of workers. The ratio of Americans supporting the programs with payroll taxes compared to retiring Americans has shrunk ever since the program was first implemented. The problem here, as we see it, is too many senior citizens taking benefits.

As the single biggest area of government expenditures, entitlement programs will cause more and more budgetary concern as long as more Americans are taking benefits, which will lead to more uncertainty throughout the economy. That is something an already weak economy does not need more of.

As the number of Americans relying on these programs increases, the more our member companies, by extension, become reliant on them as well. Social Security's monthly payments allow Americans to continue to support local small businesses and grow the economy, lessening their negative impact on the budget, while Medicare's assistance with medical payments allows those Americans to remain confident enough in their personal financial situations to keep supporting those businesses. It is still in the best interest of the economy for these programs to continue to operate in the future, something which cannot be promised with more seniors taking benefits now.

At the same time, any reforms must be implemented in such a way that they do not place further burdens on small businesses, which are responsible for nearly 65% of the new jobs created in this country. With the economy still in a slump, those companies do not need more handicaps to competition. Too often, efforts to reform these programs have ignored this fact.

This bill would not require any sacrifices from small business owners. Previous proposals have asked for an increase in payroll taxes, which must be shared between employees and businesses and which thus take more money away from the most powerful job creating engine in the economy. This proposal would not require payroll taxes to increase, allowing small businesses to keep more money in their coffers and allow them to hire more workers. That will give the economy the jolt it needs.

While we question the wisdom of placing more control in the hands of the government, as this bill would require the Social Security Administration and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to form the "Quietus Panels" necessary to reduce the ratio of workers to retirees, we do feel that this is the best proposal Congress has put forth to attack the root cause of these problems - seniors. Considering the small amount of time remaining before these programs are unable to function properly, and the fact that it would not place any more burdens on job creators, we urge you to work together and pass this legislation.

Sincerely,
Bruce Philips
Executive Director

From: zrovers@cross.house.gov
To: apeters@travis.house.gov
Date: Wednesday, June 22 11:05 p.m.
Subject: RE: Let's get together!

Andrew-

Representative Cross has a pretty packed schedule right now, as you can imagine, but he asked me to tell you that he's very glad your office reached out to us on this bill.

That being said, he is a bit on the fence at the moment. It isn't that he doesn't agree with the bill, as far as I can tell. But I think he needs a little bit of a nudge to get on board with it, the unanimous vote in the subcommittee notwithstanding.

Rep. Cross' district is in pretty strong need of funding for farmer assistance, what with the recent floods around there and all. I'm sure he'd appreciate your support for that. It might be enough to get him on your side.

Let your guy know about it, and get back to me at your convenience.

Zach Rivers
Chief of Staff
Office of The Honorable Rep. Nicholas Cross of North Carolina
U.S. House of Representatives

From: apeters@travis.house.gov
To: zrovers@cross.house.gov
Date: Wednesday, June 22 4:19 p.m.
Subject: RE: Let's get together!

Zach-

If Rep. Cross will get on board, we can throw our weight behind his funding request. If at all possible, though, it would also be nice for him to try and swing a couple other voices our way. The people who are against this are speaking loud - it's better for all of us politically if we can speak louder than them.

Andrew Peters
Chief of Staff
Office of The Honorable Rep. Henry Travis of Texas
U.S. House of Representatives

**SPEECH OF HON. JUDY NICHOLS OF MICHIGAN
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THURSDAY, JUNE 30TH**

Mr. Speaker,

I speak to you today on a matter of grave importance. Our nation, once a beacon for freedom and justice, is in danger of losing its very soul. That we could sink low enough to killing off the elderly to solve our problems is beyond horrifying.

It is not their fault that we are having these fiscal problems. These programs were promised to them. These benefits are their right, and the right of every American. We do not kill people in this country for exercising their rights under the law. No matter how bad things get, we do not do that. We have never done it. We should never even consider doing it. And I say, God help us if we do that today.

We are supposed to be better than that. And we must be better than that. For all of the fiscal logic, all of the arguments for this bill based on numbers and figures, cannot change the fact that this is the worst moral hazard we have ever faced. We cannot fall into that trap. We must not. We must show that no matter how bad things may seem, Americans will not compromise our principles of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

I call on every member of this body to recognize that there is only one right choice here, and that is to vote against the "Protecting Future Generations Act." It is not only the lives of Americans at stake - it is our country's very soul at stake. Do not forget that. We must never, ever forget it. God help us if we do.

I yield the floor.

**SPEECH OF HON. WILLIAM LEBLANC OF MINNESOTA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THURSDAY, JUNE 30TH**

Mr. Speaker,

I rise today to call on this Congress to do what others could not. I rise today to call on this Congress to secure the blessings of liberty for future generations. I rise today to call on Congress to pass the “Protecting Future Generations Act.”

Americans have always tried to ensure that the next generations would be better off than they were. That is more than a custom - that is something that is expected of every generation. We owe it to our children, grandchildren, and generations after them, to make sure that their lives are better than ours were.

This bill would do that. It would ensure that the benefits my children will be paying for will be around when it is time for them to collect. And if that means we must make sacrifices, we should do so gladly. That is what Americans do. That is what we have always done. That is one of the things that makes America, America. We try to improve our lives, but always with an eye towards the future. We cannot be self-centered - we must work together to ensure that the blessings of America are not frittered away now, not when we have a chance to preserve them for those who come after. Seniors have a responsibility to help do that.

For America would not be a beacon to the world if people did not realize that the blessings we have today must be given to future generations. That is why people continue to come here - to make a better life for themselves and their families. We should continue to make sure that is an attainable goal.

We have a chance to be truly transformational. We can make an impact that will be felt long after we are all gone. I call on my colleagues, and all Americans, to do the right thing for future generations. Vote for this bill. It's time to look forward, not back.

I yield the floor.

TRENDSETTER PROFILE: Rep. Henry Travis (D-TX)

The Man Who Would Stop The Bleeding - Humanely, Of Course

By Jeff Conaway

The first thing you notice about Henry Travis is that he could be the poster boy for the down-home, good ol' boy attitude that usually gets associated with Texas. But if you think he resents that association, it turns out he actually likes it.

"That's me, yeah," he says with a laugh. "I always make sure to say 'y'all' and 'hear' and all that good stuff. Especially when the cameras are rolling. Folks back home love to hear that. It reminds them I haven't forgot where I came from." Then, with a knowing smile and a barely suppressed chuckle that proves he's had this one in his back pocket the whole time, he adds, "y'hear?" Talk about not breaking character.

When cracking jokes or telling stories, he's an easy man to like, if you ignore the fact that he calls himself a "center-right Democrat," which has the potential to annoy just about everybody in Washington for one reason or another. Travis brushes that off with a line about picking your own battles and not letting others decide them for you. If that sounds like something out of the "Art of War," it's not intentional. Travis read it once, "but it's not my favorite." Ask him what his favorite is, and you've got him started.

Travis, of late, introduced a piece of legislation called the "Protecting Future Generations Act," a bill designed to save Social Security and Medicare by killing off the elderly, or giving them a chance to give up their benefits by age 75 to avoid facing what are called "quietus panels." It's important to do that, Travis points out, because otherwise, there won't be enough time to, as he puts it, "stop the bleeding" for those programs. And as he points out, the panels would be charged with ending the lives of the elderly as humanely and painlessly as possible, if they decided they wanted to hold onto their benefits.

"We certainly don't want to be cruel," he points out. "We know it's asking a lot of people one way or the other. As tough as the decision will be, we should be as fair as possible."

What does this have to do with his bedtime reading material? One of the things that gave him the inspiration for the bill was "A Modest Proposal," the 1700s satire written by Jonathan Swift, which "proposed" using children as a food source. Much attention has been paid to the fact that Travis appears to have missed one crucial point: Swift wasn't actually proposing that.

Perhaps sensing that this has become a point of embarrassment, Travis turned to another, much more personal, source of inspiration. Not long before the bill was introduced, Travis' mother, Linda, lost her battle with breast cancer. It hit him hard.

“She was the sweetest woman I ever knew,” Travis recalled, sometimes pausing to regain his composure. “She was always there for me, whenever things weren’t going right.” Managing to crack a smile again, he adds, “My wife may hate me for saying this, but she’s always going to have competition for the sweetest gal ever.”

What did it for Travis, he remembers, was when Linda was first diagnosed with cancer, several years ago. They caught it early and it seemed to be going into remission. Then the cancer came back. The second time, their efforts to treat it were unsuccessful. About a year ago, Linda was given only six months to live.

“It was hard, all of us, all of my family, sitting around and coming to terms with it,” Travis said. “I never cried so hard in my life.”

Travis, as a member of Congress, gets a good health insurance plan which allowed him to make his mother more comfortable. He credits that for keeping her going twice as long as she was expected to, which he calls “one of the greatest blessings God’s ever given me. To have more time with her before we had to let her go.” If it hadn’t been for the government helping out, that might not have been the case.

“Obviously, I wasn’t thinking about that when she passed,” he said. “I wasn’t doing a whole lot then. But at the funeral, I started thinking about how wonderful a mother she was, and how, if it hadn’t been for her, I might not have had these reasons to be grateful. And you know, if it hadn’t been for the government, she could have gone much earlier. And I didn’t like that idea one bit.”

The rest may turn out to be history, given how popular the legislation has become. Some of that popularity has started to get a little scarier, with major protests, some turning violent, and a more virulent rhetoric beginning to emerge. Travis dismissed that as “some hotheads wanting to vent. It’s nothing more than people exercising their rights. I don’t like what they’re saying, but all they’re doing is speaking. What’s important is, this isn’t what we’re saying. We’re asking for sacrifices, but we all want the same thing when all’s said and done. We can work together to get it.”

When asked if it was ironic that a bill that would potentially kill elderly Americans was inspired by an older woman, Travis shook that off as well.

“First of all, it gives seniors a chance to get out of that if they give up their benefits at age 75, so there’s no reason for alarm there,” he said, then started to tear up again, taking a moment to regain his composure. “Second, my mother gave me everything she had. She sacrificed for me and our whole family. She was going to leave the world a better place than she found it, no matter what. This is about my generation doing the same.”

“There’s a right way, and a wrong way,” he adds. “We’re asking a lot of people to make sacrifices, but there’s no other right way. We’re still in this together. The one thing I pray about all the time is that we never, ever forget that. We can’t ever forget that. That’s who we are. All of us.”

PROTESTORS CALL FOR ELDERLY TO BE “WIPED OUT”

Washington, DC (US Press) - Nearly 10,000 people marched in Washington today, calling for elderly Americans to be “wiped out” to save Social Security and Medicare benefits for future generations.

The march, billed by organizers as a chance “for the younger generation to stand up for its rights,” featured guest speakers, including one of the sponsors of a bill that would require seniors to give up entitlement benefits by age 75 or face a “Quietus panel,” and several youth advocates.

“Seniors have taken the agreement that government made with all Americans and wrecked it for their own benefit,” said one speaker, Josh Tholey, a member of the American Youth Council, a nationwide organization for young people which supports the bill. “It’s time to say, no more! It’s time to take our country back!”

Other guest speakers echoed the heightened rhetoric, which has become more prevalent in recent days as the debate over the legislation, the “Protecting Future Generations Act,” has become more and more heated. Some district offices of older members of Congress have been defaced, and a few members have received death threats. The Senate’s oldest member, 92-year-old Jebediah Sloan (R-WY), says he was threatened by a man who said “Your quietus panel is not going to be quiet. I’ll be cheering in the front row.”

One of the bill’s chief sponsors, Rep. Henry Travis (D-TX), spoke at the rally and was more measured in his remarks.

“What we need is to find a solution which is sustainable for all of us,” Travis said. “For younger Americans like yourselves, who are passionate about having what was promised to you be delivered, but also for older Americans who face the same questions and concerns. We’re still in this together.” The crowd responded by booing Rep. Travis, with one person shouting, “We matter more!” Travis tried to quiet the crowd, but they continued to chant “We matter more,” causing the speech to be cut short.

Rep. Travis’ office did not respond to requests for comment.

Similar rallies were held in nearly a dozen other major cities, including Cleveland, Ohio; Sacramento, California; and Orlando, Florida. No attendance figures for those rallies were readily available, but it is believed that the Washington rally was by far the biggest.

“We’re tired of politicians prioritizing old people over us,” said Richard Young, a political scientist in his mid-40s. “I’m still young enough that this is going to hurt me. I’m tired of being told, well, we need to make sure these guys have their benefits. Mine matter. I’m not going to give them up just because some old farts want theirs. We still matter in this country.

We're still able to be good Americans. All they can do is sit around in a rocking chair and bleed these programs dry."

"We're not going to take it!" a nearby marcher shouted apparently in reply.

The bill is expected to pass the House of Representatives when it comes up for a vote on Wednesday. A Senate version has not yet been introduced, although Senator Thomas Harrison (R-TX), says his planned legislation has already garnered nearly a dozen other promises of support from Senators. Harrison said in a statement that his bill would be introduced when the House passed its version.

Asked their opinions on the legislation before the House, most marchers offered some measure of praise, but said it needed to go farther.

"I'm glad somebody has the guts to do this, because it's long overdue," said one marcher, who was wearing a bandana over his face and refused to be identified. "But I feel like we're letting seniors off too easily. They're ruining the state's promise to the people. They're ruining it, and that, to me, is an attack on the younger generation. And if someone attacks us, we're going to fight back."

Another marcher, Linda Stewart, a recent college graduate who is currently unemployed, agreed, saying, "The government is broke because of these people. What they're doing is wrecking the economy, and that puts people out of work. They're ruining our lives!" Asked to elaborate on how the two were related, Stewart replied, "I studied this stuff for four years. I know what's going on."

Some of this mirrored rhetoric from several members of Congress in recent days. One, freshman Rep. Terry Winkler (D-AR), made waves when, during testimony on the House floor last week, he stated that "There is no greater threat to America right now than the seniors who are bleeding these programs to death. Not terrorism, not recession, not communism. This is our greatest threat right now. This is our Cuban Missile Crisis."

Winkler faced criticism for his remarks and calls to apologize, but he has publicly refused to do so. His campaign committee announced on Friday that he had raised nearly \$250,000 in the twenty-four hours following his speech.

Despite the rhetoric at the march, things seemed to be mostly peaceful. There were reports of minor scuffles and two people were arrested, but U.S. Capitol Police spokesman Randy Tenorman said, "That sort of thing usually happens at a march this size. Someone starts trouble. Given the size, it was fairly trouble-free."

Yes_The_Josh_Tholey

Josh Tholey

-->RealLiveAmerican You'll forgive me if I don't give a you-know-what about some old geezer's opinion. *AYC*

[Monday, July 8 at 5:23 p.m. via Soapbox Mobile App](#)

[Gold Star](#) [Shout-Out](#) [Reply](#)

Yes_The_Josh_Tholey

Josh Tholey

Now let's go out and get this bill passed in the Senate! Our futures are depending on it, people! *AYC*

[Monday, July 8 at 5:14 p.m. via Soapbox Mobile App](#)

[Gold Star](#) [Shout-Out](#) [Reply](#)

Yes_The_Josh_Tholey

Josh Tholey

The House passed it! PFGA through 298-137! We're one step closer to solving this crisis! *AYC*

[Monday, July 8 at 5:12 p.m. via Soapbox Mobile App](#)

[Gold Star](#) [Shout-Out](#) [Reply](#)

From: travis@travis.house.gov
To: harrison@harrison.senate.gov, sellers@sellers.senate.gov, williams@williams.senate.gov, collins@collins.senate.gov, anderson@anderson.senate.gov
CC: leblanc@leblanc.house.gov
Date: Thursday, July 18 1:37 p.m.
Subject: RE: How can we help?

Thanks for the e-mail, gentlemen, and really glad to hear you approve of the bill. It's no secret that we could use some backup on the senior circuit, and I'm sure I can speak for Will and myself when I say we're thrilled you all are getting on board as Senate co-sponsors. I'm glad we picked a good sponsor up there - Senator Harrison being a good ol' Texas boy like myself, I was hoping he'd have a talent for talking peoples' ears off. Sounds like he did yours.

Now, Will and I have been talking about your version of the bill. You guys have changes you want to make to it, and hopefully we can work something out when this bill gets to the conference (knock on wood). But Will's a little concerned that you guys are walking into a snake pit here. What he was wondering was, do we have to make it mandatory for seniors to get shoved off at 75, even if they give up their benefits? You don't think that's a little harsh? We didn't come up with this bill to kill off a bunch of old people - we did it to save these programs. Killing them all wasn't the point of it.

Will was thinking, and I agree with him on this, that as long as they give up the benefits, that solves the problem. Doesn't it start getting pretty tricky if we axe them whether they give up the benefits or not? We're both a little surprised that something like this is coming at us - out of the Senate, no less. Aren't you guys in the Senate supposed to cool everything down? Seems like this is getting too hot now.

Now, we're still glad you're on board, and whatever we can do to help, we're ready. But this is something we ought to think twice about.

-Henry

From: harrison@harrison.senate.gov
To: travis@travis.house.gov, leblanc@leblanc.house.gov
CC: williams@williams.senate.gov, collins@collins.senate.gov, anderson@anderson.senate.gov, harrison@harrison.senate.gov, sellers@sellers.senate.gov
Date: Thursday, July 18 2:24 p.m.
Subject: RE: How can we help?

Henry,

I have to say, this isn't what I expected to read when I opened up your message. You two put out a bill that was going to kill people - *now* you think it's going too far? When exactly did this come up?

Up here, we read the same papers you do. We read about those protests. People are fed up with these seniors. Some of the really old guys up here are getting people throwing fruit at their offices back home. Those of us who aren't up there in years - and I include myself in that, lest you ask - we're not really interested in that happening to us.

You guys put this out there hoping to light a fire under Congress. Well, it has. And now the rest of the country is getting lit up. People are marching in the streets over this bill. They want this to be big. Don't tell me that you're starting to get cold feet now.

This isn't the usual Senate. The last election was tough for a lot of us. A lot of the older folks got voted out - by a lot of the same people marching right now - and we got put in their place. The electorate is getting heated up. We can't be the cool saucer anymore. We've got to respond to what people want, because if we don't, we're all canned. Don't tell me that didn't occur to you when you put this bill out there.

The sense that we're getting from the younger folks in the Senate is that they're willing to get on board with this kind of bill. Look, this is probably only going to need to be law for a few years. When everything settles down, this will go away. Our guys up here know it, and you probably should have figured that. Somewhere down the road, when everything's hunky dory, this will be gone. There's no reason to worry about that. Until then, we gotta do what we gotta do. You were okay with pushing the envelope before - try and get on board with it this time.

Senator Tommy Harrison

From: travis@travis.house.gov
To: harrison@harrison.senate.gov, williams@williams.senate.gov,
collins@collins.senate.gov, anderson@anderson.senate.gov,
harrison@harrison.senate.gov, sellers@sellers.senate.gov
CC: leblanc@leblanc.house.gov
Date: Thursday, July 18 3:01 p.m.
Subject: RE: How can we help?

Tommy-

Maybe we can get together and talk about this. I don't know if we can settle this over email. I know you have Richards to deal with right now, but let me know.

-Henry

GOP SENATOR: NO NOMINEE VOTE UNTIL ENTITLEMENT BILL CHANGED

Washington, DC (US Press) - A leading Republican Senator has said he will block the President's most recent nominee to the Supreme Court unless specific additions are made to a bipartisan bill tackling entitlement reform.

Senator Bo Richards of Iowa made the announcement at a press conference Tuesday afternoon, shortly after departing a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on 11th Circuit Court Judge Lionel Wax.

"The legislation is still flawed at this point in time," Richards told the press. "I feel my proposals will transform this bill into a piece of legislation all Americans can be proud of."

Asked whether he was opposed to Wax as a nominee, Richards replied, "Absolutely not. This is not a personal attack on Justice Wax. I think he's a good nominee. But we need to get our priorities right."

Justice Wax was not available for comment.

Senator Richards has attempted to add a rider to the bill which would increase American aid to Israel by \$150 million a year. The bill's main sponsor in the Senate, Thomas Harrison (R-TX) said yesterday that he asked Richards not to push for unrelated amendments. The Senate Majority Leader, Andrew Smokes (D-NY) has said he does not intend to allow this rider to be attached, blasting it as an unrelated issue which has no business as part of entitlement reform.

"If the Senator from Iowa feels so strongly about increasing aid to Israel, as I am sure we all do," Smokes told reporters in a press conference on Thursday, "then he should introduce a standalone bill, and let the Senate vote on it. We literally cannot attach unrelated riders to this bill. Even if we could, this legislation is too important to be used as a bargaining chip."

Senator Smokes declined immediate comment on Tuesday, saying that his office would issue a statement shortly. Democratic party leaders, however, were quick to respond.

"This is yet another classic example of Republican obstructionism," the leader of the Democratic Senate Committee (DSC), Randy Randell, wrote in an e-mail to supporters. "Even as he said he thinks Justice Wax is a 'good nominee,' Senator Richards made it perfectly clear he was willing to use him, and this bipartisan bill, as bargaining chips," before going on to request donations.

The bill, H.R. 666, passed the House earlier this month by a vote of 298-137. Among the provisions in the Senate's version would be the mandatory extermination of all persons at age 75. The House bill would instead offer seniors a chance to forfeit their Social Security and Medicare benefits to avoid facing a so-called "Quietus Panel."

From: Randy Randell, President, DSC
Date: Tuesday, July 23 2:17 p.m.
Subject: WTF?

Dear [supporter name],

Working in politics, you see a lot of people doing crazy things when they think nobody is looking. We've just seen another example of that, and I thought you ought to know about it.

Recently, in a stunning move, Republican Senator Bo Richards of Iowa announced that he would block the President's nominee to the Supreme Court, Lionel Wax, over an unrelated amendment to the bipartisan entitlement reform bill currently before the Senate. This looks like politics as usual, right?

But there are some more wrinkles to this that make it even worse. For one, Senator Richards has said himself that he is *not opposed to Wax as a nominee. In fact, in his own words, Wax is "a good nominee."* So why is he opposed to letting the nomination proceed?

Polls show that the American people are overwhelmingly supportive of the entitlement bill and confirming Justice Wax as the newest member of the Supreme Court. This is yet another classic example of Republican obstructionism. Even as he said he thinks Justice Wax is a "good nominee," Senator Richards made it perfectly clear he was willing to use him, and this bipartisan bill, as bargaining chips.

[We need your help. Can you chip in \\$25 to help us take the fight to Republicans over their obvious attempts at obstruction?](#)

This would be funny if it wasn't so outrageous. Justice Wax has served the justice system admirably during his career on the bench. And now, he is being used as a pawn in a larger-than-life game of chess. It's just another example of Republicans using whatever backhanded tactics they can come up with to try and get their way, even if it means good men become collateral damage. We need to stand up and tell them that we won't let them do that anymore.

[It's time to say "no more" to Republican obstructionism. Join us with your gift of \\$25 to stop them.](#)

We can't stop the Republican plan of obstruction without you. I know we can count on your help.

Thanks,
Randy Randell
President, DSC

WASHINGTON ROUNDTABLE
TRANSCRIPT - JULY 28 TAPING
GUEST: SENATOR THOMAS HARRISON (R-TX)

(OPENING CREDITS)
(CUE IN)

MODERATOR: Welcome to Washington Roundtable. It's being called the first serious effort to reform Social Security and Medicare in years. It's also being called the "Death Panel bill." And it's stirring up passions on both sides of the issue. In a special edition of Washington Roundtable, we sit down with the chief Senate sponsor of the bill, Senator Thomas Harrison, Republican of Texas, to discuss differences between the House and Senate versions and its prospects for passage. Senator, thanks so much for joining us.

HARRISON: My pleasure.

MODERATOR: A lot of issues have come up in this debate, including, somehow, foreign aid. Help us cut through it all. What does this bill actually do?

HARRISON: The main thing this bill would do is mandate that seniors face end-of-life action at the age of 75, which-

MODERATOR: (crosstalk) Well, Senator, people want to know exactly what that means. Are we talking about euthanasia?

HARRISON: Well, you know, I'm not crazy about that word choice. There are so many negative connotations. But yes, that is basically what this bill would provide. People are living longer, way past what the authors of these programs figured they would. That drains the benefits away. That means we have to start bringing life spans back within that original region for the program to remain sustainable as is.

MODERATOR: We've also heard that this is different from the House version, which would have given seniors the chance to opt out of their Social Security and Medicare benefits at age 75 rather than face this, as you put it, end-of-life action.

HARRISON: That bill, I think, doesn't address the full issue. You're still talking about costs to care for seniors in their old age. Even if the government isn't paying for it, you have doctors who could be helping people who still have a good chance

for a good life, they can't do that. You have adults who could be contributing to society, but they have to care for their elderly parents, so they can't do that. There are all of these other effects on society that these seniors are having.

MODERATOR: Usually, it's the House that proposes more radical bills. Why the switch in this case?

HARRISON: Well, there's a lot of new blood in the Senate. People weren't happy with what the old blood was doing. You know, it was Senate tradition to calm the legislative process down, but that's not any specifically defined role. We got put in to change how Washington operates, and I think we've done that. This is the new way of doing business.

MODERATOR: We've also heard reports that there has been a big gap opened up between you and the sponsors of the original House bill. How serious is that, and how is that going to impact passage at the end of the day?

HARRISON: You're talking about Henry Travis. He's a good old Texas boy, like me. And Willy LeBlanc, the other big sponsor in the House, he's a smart man as well, he understands how things need to work. Whatever differences we have, that's politics. People disagree about some things. I'm dead sure we can patch up our differences. I don't think that'll hurt the bill's passage. We'll resolve the differences in committee. That happens all the time. People don't have hurt feelings for long.

MODERATOR: Some people are getting worried about the crowds who have been protesting in favor of the bill. Does their rhetoric hurt the chances of the bill getting passed?

HARRISON: You know, people are frustrated, and they're letting their frustration be known. And that's their right under the Constitution. And, you know, they're venting like this because they're really upset. But they're not hurting anyone. I think what we're seeing is a real, honest, grassroots response to a totally unfair situation. I think we should be praising these folks rather than demonizing them. They have a right to be upset. And we're going to address their concerns.

MODERATOR: We'll be back with Senator Thomas Harrison of Texas, and ask him about some opposition to the bill.

(commercial)

WASHINGTON HERALD-EXAMINER, JULY 30

EDITORIAL

THE SENATE'S NUCLEAR TREATY

We have made no secret in the past about our disdain for the undemocratic principles of the Senate. To our view, all that happens is that the wishes of the American people go unheeded thanks to some archaic rules that say 60 votes, not 51, are needed for any legislation to pass. This is undemocratic, by any stretch of the word. And we likewise made no secret of our approval when the 60-vote threshold was removed last year, in what was called the “nuclear option” by Congress-watchers.

Now, however, there is a very real risk of the Senate's outbreak of democracy coming to a quick end. Senator Jebediah Sloan (R-WY) has proposed undoing the nuclear option and requiring any legislation to pass the Senate with a 60-vote supermajority rather than a simple majority. Much has been made of the fact that Sloan, the oldest member of the Senate, seemingly hopes to slow passage of the “Protecting Future Generations Act,” a bill which would take end-of-life action against the elderly, himself obviously among them, to solve the entitlement crisis.

Polls show that Americans strongly support this legislation. Early numbers had support above 50%. Now polls have those numbers moving up closer to 70%. And now, the Senator from Wyoming proposes to stymie the will of the people by introducing an undemocratic procedure back into the Senate? This is irreconcilable with the idea of democracy. It was a decision that may have made sense early on in our Union's history, but times have changed. The rules should change with them.

In calling for an end to the nuclear option, Senator Sloan argued that it would “protect the rights of the minority against the power of a vociferous, unruly majority.” He was believed to be referring to the crowds of angry Americans, mostly young people, who have been protesting against the destructive effect senior citizens have had on Social Security and Medicare's finances and future. And while some protestors have become more violent, something which clearly should not and has not been condoned, the Senator should remember that it is seniors, like himself, who have had as much of a hand in creating this mess as anyone else. And now, he is trying to stymie legislation which would clean up the mess they have created. “Treasonous” may be too strong of a word to describe his efforts, but to our view, it is close.

We can only hope that Sloan is unsuccessful in his undemocratic efforts, and call on every Senator to reject his proposal. When this legislation passes, we suspect he will not have to wait long for his “Quietus Panel.” We see no reason to be concerned with that.

SENATOR STRIPPED OF VOTING RIGHTS

Blasted push for "Protecting Future Generations Act"

Washington, DC (US Press) - The Senate's oldest member has been stripped of his voting power after making an impassioned speech against an entitlement reform bill before Congress.

Senator Jebediah Sloan (R-WY), age 92, spoke for nearly half an hour on the floor of the Senate, devoting his entire speech to the "Protecting Future Generations Act" currently before the Senate. Sloan was visibly animated during the speech, often shaking a cane he used to walk to the podium.

"What are we coming to, Mr. President?" Sloan said. "What in the name of God are we doing here today? Why are we talking about a bill which would kill old people? What has happened to this country?"

Sloan was frequently shouted down from the rest of the Senate but refused to end his speech. At one point, someone in the audience yelled "Lying geezer!" Sloan did not respond directly to that remark, although he appeared shaken by it.

"Have we no decency left?" he asked. "Have we become a body which no longer embodies the best of America? For if we have, then there is no more hope for us. This country, the country that I love, the country that I and millions of others have fought and bled and died for, no longer exists if we take this step." That remark brought a cry of "You should've died back then and saved us the trouble!" from the Senate floor, although it was unclear who said it.

When Sloan began his speech, the Senate floor was mostly empty except for a handful of other Senators. During the speech, more Senators arrived on the floor and the noise grew louder. Sloan nevertheless continued his speech, haltingly at times, before finally throwing up his hands and yielding the floor after it became harder for his words to be heard over the shouts from the floor.

After it was over, Senator Thomas Harrison (R-TX), the chief sponsor of the bill, took the podium and urged the Senate to strip Sloan of his voting power. Harrison cited a Senate bylaw which allows a simple majority of the Senate to strip a member of voting rights if the member is deemed to be "sufficiently lacking in decorum," according to Harrison.

Sloan rose from his seat, angrily yelling at Harrison and shaking his cane, but he was not recognized by the floor and thus could not interrupt Harrison's speech. His words were drowned out by the microphone Harrison was using to speak, and the Senate recorder appeared unable to write down what was being said.

Legal experts contacted by US Press claimed they had no knowledge that such a bylaw existed.

“Wait, they said what?” asked Richard Wilkins, a political scientist at Maston University in Richmond. “I have no idea what they’re talking about. I don’t think that rule even exists. For one thing, what the hell does ‘sufficiently lacking in decorum’ mean? And why does a simple majority get to do it? You can censure people for conduct unbecoming a member of Congress, but I have no idea what this poor guy was doing to merit that.”

After searching through the Senate bylaws, Wilkins confirmed that the bylaw did not seem to exist.

No objections were raised on the floor, however. Sloan made another effort to rise to the microphone, but several other Senators ran up to the podium first to block him. Harrison called for an end to debate and the voting began.

The final vote count was 74-26 in favor of stripping Sloan of his voting power. Pursuant to the bylaw, the count was retroactively changed to 74-25, invalidating Sloan’s vote. Sloan sat in his chair, shaking his head for a few moments while the motion was reported passed, before leaving the chamber.

On his way out, Sloan got into a heated argument with another group of Senators sitting near the door.

“You ought to be ashamed of yourselves!” Sloan could be heard yelling.

“Just go drop dead!” another Senator yelled back.

From: travis@travis.house.gov
To: leblanc@leblanc.house.gov
Date: Saturday, August 3 2:47 p.m.
Subject: What do we do now?

Will, I think we need to get our heads together for a strategy session. We need to come up with a way to slow this Senate bill down, or at least make sure the bad stuff is tossed out in committee. I'm pretty sure there are a few folks left in the House who will have our backs on this, and I think we should bring them in too. Get back to me and let me know what works for you. We need to get down to this quick.

-Henry

From: leblanc@leblanc.house.gov
To: travis@travis.house.gov
Date: Saturday, August 3 4:11 p.m.
Subject: RE: What do we do now?

Henry-

I just talked to Walsh. He's saying that if the Senate version comes to us for a vote, he'll vote for it. And Winters and Livingston sounds like they're on the fence now. Everybody's getting a lot of constituent pressure, even me.

I don't think we can slow this thing down anymore, Henry. The bill's going to pass in the Senate - that's all but a done deal. Did you see what they did to Sloan? They made up a damn bylaw to take away one vote and they didn't even need to! And nobody is raising a stink about it! The people who think it's wrong are too scared to be labeled a - what are they calling it now? An "elder-lover"? All the momentum is behind the Senate version. Nobody's even *talking* about ours!

I was talking with my Chief of Staff, Frank. He thinks the only way we can stop this is to derail the bill completely. And even then, he thinks that could backfire on us if we're not careful. Unless you can persuade your pal Tommy to back off on this stuff in committee, I don't know what else there is to do. And I don't see him doing that. If you want to stop this as much as I do, we basically have to kill the bill. I'm making time to go on as many of the Sunday morning talk shows as I can. If we can convince enough people that this is going too far, we might have a chance. Otherwise we're in a lot of trouble.

If you still want to get together and hammer out a message, that's fine with me. I'm just not sure how much good it'll do. We're on the losing side right now.

-Rep. William LeBlanc

From: travis@travis.house.gov
To: leblanc@leblanc.house.gov
Date: Sunday, August 4 12:24 p.m.
Subject: RE: What do we do now?

Just saw you on NBS. Good call going on Gary's show. He seems to be a bit more friendly to us than a lot of the other hosts.

I gotta admit, I was a little surprised to see you so feisty on that show. I was sure you'd be exhausted. I say that because I haven't gotten a wink of sleep in...well, seems like forever. I'm terrified. God help me, this wasn't what I wanted. I know you know that - I know you wouldn't have agreed to this kind of bill in the first place. All I wanted to do was give something to my kids and their kids. But not like this. This is turning into something just truly horrible. And I don't want to be the guy who made it happen. I just wish I knew some way to make it stop.

But Tommy's not emailing me back. They've taken this and turned it into something else just so they can get re-elected. I ask you, would you do that just to come back here for a couple of years? I like my job, but nothing is worth that. And okay, I guess I wanted to use this to get re-elected too. But I never expected this to happen. If I had, I probably never would have gone ahead with it. Much as I hate to admit it, I think Nichols had a point in her speech a few weeks ago - you know, where she said we were losing our soul? Maybe she's right. And I didn't see it.

Or maybe I'm just exhausted and needed to vent. Anyway, nice job again on the TV. I'll try and get some interviews too. We need to keep the pressure on in case the Senate decides to vote. Then pray it actually works.

-Henry

From: leblanc@leblanc.house.gov
To: travis@travis.house.gov
Date: Sunday, August 4 12:57 p.m.
Subject: RE: What do we do now?

Glad you thought I was awake. As it turns out, you were right. I haven't slept much either, I suppose for the same reasons you haven't. I know we're both scared, but we both have to keep fighting. It's the only way we can stop being scared.

And we all have to let off some steam sometimes. Don't worry about it. Let's not get too discouraged. Someone's got to save the world. It might as well be us.

-Rep. William LeBlanc

“PROTECTING FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT” PASSES SENATE

President lends bill his endorsement

Washington, DC (US Press) - The bill that would require Americans age 75 or older to be euthanized by the government passed the Senate today.

The “Protecting Future Generations Act” was passed by a vote of 76-23, with about equal numbers of Democrats and Republicans voting for passage. One Senator, Jebediah Sloan (R-WY), was not permitted to vote on the legislation after being stripped of his voting rights a week ago.

Supporters of the legislation say that this bill, by euthanizing the elderly, will slow the rise of Social Security and Medicare payouts, which in turn will close both programs’ budget deficits and preserve them for future generations. Opponents question the validity of killing elderly Americans as a means to provide financial stability to the programs.

“It’s a great day for America!” Senator Thomas Harrison (R-TX), the bill’s Senate co-sponsor, shouted as he left the Senate floor after the vote. On the floor, some Senators high-fived each other when the final vote total was announced, while others, mostly older members, left the chamber quickly.

A similar bill passed the House of Representatives 298-137 in June. The House version would allow seniors to forego their Social Security and Medicare benefits starting at age 75 to avoid what are being termed “Quietus Panels,” while the Senate bill would put seniors before those panels regardless of whether they gave up their entitlement benefits. Those bills will head to a conference committee to be reconciled, and final legislation will need to be agreed upon by both houses. Some observers have stated that the political momentum is behind the Senate version more than the House’s.

“The good money is on the conference committee just taking the Senate bill verbatim and sending it on to the House,” said Brendan Wills, a consulting advisor at the McHale Group in Washington. “For better or worse, that’s where the public support is right now. The anti-elderly sentiment is stronger than I think a lot of people predicted.”

Representatives Henry Travis (D-TX) and William LeBlanc (R-MN), the chief sponsors of the House’s legislation, did not respond to requests for comment. The two representatives have been appearing on several talk shows calling for the Senate version to be scrapped and the House version to be passed.

After the Senate vote, supporters got a big boost when President Sanderson announced he would sign the legislation if it reached his desk. Previously, the President had not committed to signing or vetoing the legislation.

“Everybody in Washington knows that our entitlement programs are in dire fiscal shape,” a statement from Sanderson read. “I applaud the Congress for taking strong action to solve this crisis, and I look forward to working with them to solve the other problems facing our nation.”

Opponents of the legislation blasted the Senators who voted for it - and in some cases, the people who demonstrated in support of this legislation.

“What is this country coming to?” asked Senator Rich Wylen (D-FL), 72, by telephone from an undisclosed location. “We have all these people marching in the streets calling for elderly Americans to be murdered! And the Congress has just gone along with it, hook, line, and sinker!” When pressed for his location, Wylen replied, “It’s better I don’t say,” and then hung up the phone.

Still, even opponents of the legislation conceded they have little hope of slowing its passage through the final steps of the legislative process.

“It’s a real shame that this is happening right now,” said John Swift, a spokesman for Americans United for Geniality and Harmony (AUGH), an organization of mostly younger Americans opposed to the bill. “But given the amount of interest Congress has taken in the bill, and the fact that Congress could override a veto if there was one, I don’t know what else there is to do.”

He added, “I guess I’m going to go home and hug my parents really tight tonight. And I’m going to pray that some miracle arises that slows this down.”

Mr. Smith Goes To Conference

By Sarah Fellowes

Rep. William LeBlanc (R-MN) was elected by claiming to be a Washington outsider. And he is - no government experience prior to this, now his second term in the House of Representatives. Just a career as a businessman operating a small chain of restaurants throughout Minnesota. He said during his first campaign that this “makes me more qualified to run a government than a politician. I actually know why people are important, I actually know why finances are important. These insiders, they don’t.”

LeBlanc, however, appears to have one problem. He doesn’t seem to know how to deal with those insiders, especially when it comes to a conference committee.

LeBlanc, along with Rep. Henry Travis (D-TX), co-sponsored the “Protecting Future Generations Act,” an entitlement reform bill, in the House, where it passed overwhelmingly. A similar version recently passed in the Senate. Of course, this isn’t where the story ends, because the bills are different in one major regard. The House bill, championed by LeBlanc and Travis, allows seniors to give up entitlement benefits by age 75 to avoid a “Quietus Panel” which has the power to end their lives. The Senate version does not.

This is no accident. As the House version progressed, polls showed Americans turning heavily against the elderly. The number of Americans who said they blamed the elderly for the entitlement crisis was at 77% in a recent US Press poll. More tellingly, the number of Americans who blame the elderly for the entire government deficit was at 56%. But the most telling stat was the number of Americans who said they felt those statements applied to their relatives - 27%. Not a majority, of course, but still high.

Americans are so mad that more than a quarter of them are willing to throw their own granny under the bus.

LeBlanc and Travis should probably be happy that their brainchild has gotten to within a hop, skip and a jump of passage, what with the President finally coming down off the fence and saying he will sign the bill into law if it reaches his desk. But both men, in interviews, have said they are concerned about where this is going.

“It wasn’t our intention to just kill the elderly, that’s it,” LeBlanc said during an interview on NBS’s “One On One With Gary Bloom.” “One of the most

important things about our bill was that it would give people a choice - entitlements or life. But we never made the decision for them.”

Now, LeBlanc is in an interesting position, arguing that the conference committee now considering what to send to both houses should keep that part of the House bill intact - or not send anything.

“The bill only makes sense if there’s a choice,” he said. “It doesn’t affect the outcome when you talk about the entitlement programs. Both bills work equally well in that regard. But as drastic as this is, there’s a major difference between the House and Senate bills. As drastic as our solution was, we don’t need to be as drastic as the Senate was. That’s too much. That’s harder to accept for us. We’d rather not see that come to a vote.”

Depending on who you talk to, being a Washington outsider can be a good thing. But in this case, it’s a liability for LeBlanc. All signs as of right now point to the committee accepting the Senate’s version in its entirety, which would mean the House would simply have to vote on that bill to send it to the President. Aides to the members of the committee say their bosses are basically ready to do just that.

LeBlanc and Travis have been trying to keep the pressure on the committee to let seniors have a choice whether to give up their benefits and avoid the “Quietus Panels,” but public opinion doesn’t lie. The same poll that showed a quarter of Americans didn’t really care for their own grannies also showed that 69% of Americans would prefer the language in the Senate version over the House’s.

LeBlanc, ever the outsider, isn’t relying on those polls. He’s still arguing that this is a bad idea. But it’s an uphill battle. Because if there’s one thing that insiders do pay attention to, it’s polls.

Now they’re both trying to take their case to the American people to try and change their views on the bill, which seems a little like trying to put out a house fire after you started it. That won’t be an easy task in any case. People have gotten riled up enough that a strong drop in public opinion won’t be easy to achieve.

LeBlanc may be the best kind of guy to decide how the government should work, but he doesn’t seem to understand how it does work.

From: travis@travis.house.gov
To: harrison@harrison.senate.gov
Date: Saturday, August 10 7:25 a.m.
Subject: We need to talk.

Tommy-

I keep trying to get you on your cell but you aren't picking up. This is really important - we really need to talk about this.

Look, this has gone on for long enough. This isn't what Will and I had in mind when we proposed this bill. Things have gotten too hairy right now. And now the committee's going to send something through that neither of us wants. This wasn't what we wanted to do, Tommy. This wasn't why we fought tooth and nail for the bill. There's such a thing as too much, and we've definitely gotten to that point now. It has to stop. I know you wanted to prove your bona fides, but this is getting out of hand, and you're in a better place to stop it than I am.

We both know it doesn't make a difference if people can give up their benefits and stay alive. That doesn't mean anything and you know it. I'm not talking about letting seniors off the hook completely. We have to do something about this, I know. But the way I see it, and I know Will agrees with me, our way is just as good as yours. Even that fellow Swift, he would've thought this was going too far, and look at what he wrote. You proved you're tough on this. Now it has to stop.

If this makes it past conference committee, things are going to get really bad. You gotta slow this thing down. I need you to do whatever you can do to stop the committee from just sending us the Senate bill. And I know you can lean on some people in the committee a bit.

I know we probably had as much to do with people getting agitated as anyone else, but that wasn't what we wanted. And we certainly didn't want people getting fired up for a bill like this. We don't need a bill this tough to solve the problem, and I think you know that.

I'm asking you, please, do whatever you have to do to stop this thing from going through. I wanted to do something that would change America forever, but I never wanted it to be something like this. If this is what we're going to do, I'd rather we do nothing. I don't want to regret what I've done for the rest of my life. We need to do the right thing here. And I need your help to get it done. I don't care what it takes or what you want from me in return. I'm just asking you to see the light. Please, get back to me when you have a free moment.

Henry

NATIONAL INQUISITOR EXCLUSIVE!

POL LEADING DEATH PANEL EFFORT LIES ON AGE!

The National Inquisitor has learned that Senator Thomas “Tommy” Harrison of Texas faked his birth certificate to make himself seem five years younger!

In an *exclusive* bombshell interview, a source in the Texas Department of Health, who wished to remain anonymous to avoid repercussions, says that she has seen the original birth certificate and that it lists the Senator’s age as 53, not 48, as the Senator claims in his official biography.

“Somebody faked it,” the source told the Inquisitor. “The original is still on file and anybody could go in and look at it.”

The source also added that she is afraid for her safety if she gets caught. “If they find out who I am, who knows what they’ll do? He’s a member of Congress - he can do whatever he wants! Please don’t tell them who I am! He’s already lied about this! I don’t know what he’ll do next! I’m really scared!”

The Senator is a major Senate sponsor for a bill that would kill all Americans over the age of 75. This is sure to embarrass the Senator and could make the bill stall.

A spokesman for the Senator refused to talk to the Inquisitor, mentioning something about not wanting “to respond to anything written in that rag” before hanging up.

“Doesn’t surprise me,” said Chris Morrison, who ran against Harrison in the recent election. “We knew he was up to no good somehow. We tried to convince people that he wasn’t trustworthy, but he was able to wriggle his way out of it. I think this proves beyond a doubt that he’s not. He has abused the trust of all of his constituents and should resign! If he can’t be trusted, he shouldn’t be representing us!”

Look Who's At It Again

by [Laura Brady](#) on Monday, August 14 at 3:31pm

Nearly two and a half million proud Americans subscribe to this page. Each of them knows that I'm not a big fan of the biased liberal media. That's not too surprising – they're in the business of “gotcha” questions that don't do a whole lot to address substantive issues today. And sure, every now and then, they'll get their hands dirty with a little character assassination.

The latest example is Senator Tommy Harrison out of Texas. Recently, the National Inquisitor has reported that some unnamed bureaucrat is accusing him of falsifying his birth certificate to make him seem five years younger than he, ahem, “really” is.

I've been there, folks. I've had people coming at me with crazy accusations like this, backed up by the word of someone hiding behind the cloak of anonymity. And there's nothing in the law that says someone who wants to lie can't do it without telling us who they really are. But I guess I'd hope that the media would at least think twice before throwing these accusations out there.

Maybe we shouldn't be surprised by now. But it's still frustrating to see a good man like Senator Harrison slandered by some rag of a publication which can't even be bothered to follow the journalistic code of ethics.

Now, I haven't seen the birth certificate. If it turned out that Senator Harrison was lying, and there was proof of it, that would be a different story. But I haven't seen this proof, and neither has anyone else. If they want to put this controversy to rest once and for all, the liberal media can produce the birth certificate and let us decide for ourselves what we want to believe. Until then, we shouldn't give a whole lot of attention to these so-called “journalists.”

I think we all know what's going on here. Senator Harrison has been leading the charge to pass the “Protecting Future Generations Act” in the Senate. It's a bill, with bipartisan support, which has the potential to reform our entitlement system once and for all. But of course, some liberals have gotten a bit antsy over it, and so now they're trying to derail this bill by attacking its sponsor.

More dirty tricks from the Left. But are we going to let them dictate what bills get passed and what the future of America will hold? I say no. And I hope you say no too.

Let's stand with Senator Harrison against these cowardly attacks. Let's stand together for a brighter America.

–Laura Brady

If You Can't Beat 'Em, Make 'Em Older

Tuesday, August 15

BEGIN TRANSCRIPT

HAROLD SMYTHE: A crazy story coming out of Texas now. We're hearing from the National Inquisitor - that paragon of journalistic virtue - that the Senator from Texas, Tommy-Boy Harrison, has faked his birth certificate to make himself look five years younger. This is supposed to be so embarrassing to the Senator because he's been leading the charge to whack the seniors who are driving this country off a cliff. So if he's five years closer to being a senior...pandemonium reigns. This is what we've been told.

Now, all you out there are listening in because you want to know what I think. I think it's nonsense. It's exactly the kind of plot that could only come from some coked-up liberal. "Oh no! He's five years older than he said! Oh good heavens! Let's bring out our pitchforks!" Well sir, I'm not impressed. Even if it was true, it doesn't change the fact that those seniors are still leeching off the system which all of us have to pay for. Padding around their cozy homes, nice and comfortable. Why should it matter to them that the country's going broke? They'll be keeling over soon enough.

Now, I just received an interesting e-mail from an older man. He writes..."Sir." Oh, that's my old man voice. It's basically the same as my old woman voice. "Sir. Do you know what my son told me yesterday? He told me that what was going on in this country today was my fault and the fault of all elderly Americans. And I know he listens to your show. I know he gets it from you. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Someday, you will be where we are now."

Stirring, I know. I nearly...nearly cried reading it. Not because it made me sad, though. No, I nearly cried laughing. "Aww, my son doesn't love me anymore! Boo-hoo! Waaaah! I need to go to the bathroom again! Nobody loves me! Where did I put my glasses? Why is it so cold in here? Waaaaaaah!"

That young man deserves a round of applause, ladies and gentlemen.

(recorded applause)

And the older gentleman...

(chainsaw, horror movie scream)

You know, I really hope they put that in this bill that the Senator from Texas is sponsoring. Put it on pay-per-view. The money the government could make from that, we could finally shut up the liberals who want to take money away from Americans and pay for their socialist schemes. More on this after the break.

BREAK TRANSCRIPT

TEXAS GOVERNOR: BIRTH CERTIFICATE DOCTORED

Austin (US Press) - The governor of Texas broke his silence on the case of a United States Senator whose birth certificate was allegedly doctored. In a statement issued by the office of Larry McKay (R), the governor admitted that it appeared the birth certificate of Senator Thomas Harrison (R) appeared to have been altered.

“It appears that someone changed the date of birth on the certificate, specifically moving the year of birth five years later than the Senator’s actual birth date,” the statement read in part. “We are investigating to determine when and how this change was made.”

Speculation has centered on Brenda Wells, an employee of the Texas Department of Health, who is believed to have given an interview with the tabloid National Inquisitor claiming that the certificate was doctored. Wells has denied that, and the Inquisitor is refusing to comment, citing the “Shield Law” protecting journalists from having to divulge their sources.

The accusation could prove embarrassing for Harrison, the lead Senate sponsor of the “Protecting Future Generations Act,” the entitlement bill currently before Congress. There was some speculation that the bill might be stalled with the Senate’s top sponsor under fire for lying about his age, but congressional officials indicated that would not be the case.

“Why should it be?” one top legislative aide said on condition of anonymity. “So the chief sponsor is old. The bill still does what we thought it did. No, if anyone was trying to intentionally derail the bill with this, they could have done a lot better. All that it means is that this guy might have to go up against one of the [Quietus] panels a bit earlier,” referring to the panels set up by the legislation which would decide the fate of seniors at age 75.

“People vote on the bill, not the sponsor,” the aide continued. “It’ll get through committee, and the support in both houses will still be there. Senator Harrison is going to face some questions, but anyone who voted for it once will probably do it again regardless of how old he turns out to be.”

The fallout could extend further beyond Capitol Hill. Presidential hopeful Laura Brady had previously endorsed Harrison’s version of events in posts on social media websites, blasting the accusations as “a little character assassination” and an attack by liberals uncomfortable with the entitlement legislation. Brady did not comment when contacted by US Press.

The Senate legislation Harrison has been championing is considered to be stronger than the House legislation, which would allow seniors to forego Social Security and Medicare benefits by age 75 to avoid facing a panel. The chief sponsor of that legislation, Rep. Henry Travis (D-TX), has been calling for the Senate legislation to be scrapped in favor of the House bill, and if necessary, to vote down the Senate bill without seeking replacement legislation. A spokesman for Rep. Travis would not comment when asked about these developments.

Eric Sanderson
President Of The United States

Statement on Signing The “Protecting Future Generations Act”
Wednesday, August 23

Today I have signed into law the “Protecting Future Generations Act.” The Act will provide for the continued fiscal strength of Social Security and Medicare by putting Americans age 75 or higher before “Quietus Panels” which will determine what type of end-of-life action is best for each individual. This plan will ensure that Americans for generations to come will be able to look forward to entitlement programs which are financially strong and secure, and allow younger Americans to focus on bettering their lives for the future, rather than worrying about supporting the elderly.

Economists predicted that, without broad action, Social Security and Medicare would have become overwhelmed by waves of senior citizens attempting to claim benefits. The programs, within a matter of months, would have been completely insolvent. This bill ensures that this will not happen.

This was a drastic action. And I applaud the Congress for coming together to do what was needed to tackle this major issue. Social Security and Medicare are bedrock programs. Their loss would be a devastating blow to American society, at a time when our society seems to be under attack from a down economy and broad pessimism. But it is comforting to know that we can still come together when times are tough and, even if today poses its own challenges, continue to look ahead to a brighter tomorrow.

My administration will never stop fighting for that better tomorrow. And I continue to ask Congress, and the American people, to stand with me as we work towards that goal. This is about more than my success, whether or not I win another election. This is about all of us. This is about ensuring that America remains a shining beacon for the rest of the world, for generations to come. We can get there together, and I call on all proud Americans for their help.

Eric Sanderson,

The White House,

August 23.

US PRESS ANALYSIS: “PROTECTING FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT”

Washington, DC (US Press) - With the stroke of a pen, Social Security and Medicare have been saved for generations to come.

At least, that’s what one side says. The other side says that, with that same stroke, potentially millions of Americans will be put to death.

Both sides are correct in their assessments of the “Protecting Future Generations Act,” signed into law yesterday. Neither of those viewpoints are new, either; both sides have used those arguments through the entire legislative process. But both are very strong arguments to make. With the bill now becoming law, here is what we can expect to see happen next:

Entitlement Reform

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) reported that the original House legislation, which would have allowed seniors to forego their entitlement benefits by age 75 to avoid facing a government “Quietus Panel,” would put Social Security and Medicare back on track to budget surpluses within about a year, giving them both what amounts to a new lease on life. The Senate bill, which would become law, mandated that all seniors would face a Panel whether they gave up their benefits or not. The CBO did not do a separate study of the Senate legislation, saying instead that, “We believe both pieces of legislation will have mostly the same effect on Social Security and Medicare’s budgets.”

Observers generally agree, but with a caveat.

“The one extra cost you’ll maybe see is the cost of ending the lives of more seniors,” said Brian Corrigan, a political scientist at National University in Washington. “Originally, the plan was to limit that by letting seniors give up their benefits, so not as many would need to face these panels. Now they will, and that is going to cost more money. It’s still a paid-for bill, but a bit less so.”

Still, supporters contend that this legislation will be enough to put the programs back on strong financial footing. Few people appear to have contested that point. Supporters also argue that this will not require any tax increases or changes in benefits, an argument which attracted members of Congress from both sides of the aisle to pass the bill.

Opponents do dispute one part of that assertion, however.

“No changes in benefits?” asked John Swift, a spokesman for Americans United for Geniality and Harmony (AUGH). “What about the fact that Americans will be killed at age 75? That seems like a big change in benefits!”

Still, under the legislation, seniors could collect benefits up to age 75, and the formula for how much those benefits will be has not been altered by the legislation.

“Quietus Panels”

Under the legislation, the government would form “Quietus Panels,” which would determine whether seniors should be “remanded for end-of-life action.” Theoretically, the panel members can decide whether an individual should be remanded or let off, based on various factors. Practically, that may not be the case - something both sides have mostly agreed on.

“You’d be taking the teeth out of the bill by letting a lot of seniors off the hook,” said Corrigan. “The whole point is to limit expenditures on entitlement programs. If seniors still collect, that doesn’t happen. The panel members will likely be under pressure to remand just about everyone.”

Swift agrees. “Just because they can let people go, that doesn’t mean they will. It’s a program set up by the government, ultimately administrated by politicians who have promises to keep. This way, they can let a person or two go when they want to look more merciful, but most are going to be murdered.”

Official guidelines for the panel members have not been released to the public, and there has been no word as to whether they will be. Some have also called for statistics on how many Americans have been remanded to also be released when the panels begin work, with some groups threatening to file Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests if those reports are not published.

“Right now, the only way someone will know what is going on in these panels is if it’s one of their relatives,” said Swift. “By that point, it will be too late.”

Some discussion has come up about an amendment to allow for an appeals process if a senior does not agree with the panel’s recommendation. No legislation has been proposed, and most observers agree that idea seems to be nowhere near popular enough to pass.

“People voted for this bill because they figured this was as close to a silver bullet as they’d ever get,” said Corrigan. “They won’t turn around and try to limit its power.”

From: leblanc@leblanc.house.gov
To: travis@travis.house.gov
Date: Saturday, August 26 1:49 p.m.
Subject: Just heard

I just heard you're going to pull out of your House race. I know you're probably feeling a little disillusioned right now. I'd be lying if I said I hadn't thought about resigning too. But I think it's my job to try and talk you out of this.

Henry, this wasn't your fault. What we did - it was tough, no question about it, but it wasn't what ended up getting passed. It wasn't your idea. And you fought to stop it. You didn't lose sight of what we were doing, and you sure didn't sacrifice your ideals for pragmatism. You're exactly the kind of person who should stay here. Congress needs more people like us. I know a couple of people can't do a whole lot by themselves, but at least we can make sure there are more like us down the road. And if that can lead to something good a while down the road, then doesn't that seem like it's worth a little aggravation in the short term?

I'll tell you what. Why don't you let me take you out to dinner tonight and we can talk more about this? You're a good representative. I don't want to be the only one here with a strong backbone. Let me know.

-Rep. William LeBlanc

From: travis@travis.house.gov
To: leblanc@leblanc.house.gov
Date: Saturday, August 26 3:24 p.m.
Subject: RE: Just heard

Sorry it took so long for me to get back to you, Will. I was just backing up our e-mails. Thinking I might hold onto them for a while.

I appreciate the pep talk, but my mind's made up. There's too much of a mess around here for us to clean up. Nobody around here is interested in doing the right thing. It's all about the re-election for them - preening for the cameras and making sure everybody knows how gung-ho they are. You can't beat that without blowing up the system. I'm getting out while I still have my sanity.

That said, I'm not one to turn down a free dinner, if you're still offering. We can start planning for you running for President, if you're serious about changing the way things work. I'd back you, no question. And I'd only ask for the VP nomination. Seems only fair.

-Henry

WASHINGTON ROUNDTABLE

TRANSCRIPT - AUGUST 27 TAPING

GUESTS: ROB RILLING, SARAH FELLOWES, MARSHALL ADAMS, BRIAN STEWART

(OPENING CREDITS)

(CUE IN)

MODERATOR: Welcome to Washington Roundtable. It's been quite a week in Washington, so we have a lot to talk about. First, a major piece of legislation, the "Protecting Future Generations Act," was signed into law by the President four days ago. Supporters are touting the bill as the first strong effort to deliver fiscal stability to entitlement programs in recent memory. But will it deliver on its promises - and have we seen the last of the debate over this legislation and entitlements in general? So I'll turn it over to our panel, and let me start with Rob Rilling, senior fellow at the Legacy Foundation, a conservative think tank. Rob, your thoughts on the impact of this bill?

RILLING: Well, you're right, this is the first bill to actually take a serious step to ensuring that these programs exist into the future, but the more you think about it, the more problems you can think of.

MODERATOR: Well, this surprises me. I thought-

RILLING: (crosstalk) I do that sometimes.

MODERATOR: I thought you would have loved it.

RILLING: I don't dislike the bill. I do wish it had been done a little differently. Right now, you have all of this being put in the hands of a government agency, you're adding another layer to the already bloated bureaucracy. And what I think we're going to see is a backlog of cases as time goes on. That will slow things down, it will reduce the program's effectiveness and cost savings. I would be stunned if this was done efficiently, or at least as efficiently as it could have been done if the government let the private sector take it.

MODERATOR: Sarah Fellowes is laughing at this, Sarah Fellowes the syndicated columnist. I take it you disagree.

FELLOWES: I do, yes. Look, it's not a perfect bill, the perfect so often being the enemy of the good. I think this does something very real and concrete. It changes the entire fiscal situation, it puts the budget on very sound footing, and it lets people who are paying into the system now know that it's going to still be there for them when it's time for them to start collecting their benefits.

RILLING: But at some point, don't we run the risk of a future Congress coming in here and saying, well, we've fixed the budget, we've gotten the program back on stable footing for years to come-

FELLOWES: (crosstalk) That's exactly what we should want.

RILLING: (crosstalk) And, yes, I agree.

FELLOWES: Nobody has indicated this is going to last forever.

RILLING: Yes, that is a good goal to reach for, I agree with you. But what if that Congress, or this unelected bureaucrat placed in charge of the program, decides, now would be a good time to remove this age limit, now that we don't need it anymore? We could end up right back where we started.

MODERATOR: Marshall Adams, the network's chief political correspondent, looks like he wants in on this.

ADAMS: What gave it away? (laughter) I think this bill is actually going to do more than we think. Looking ahead, there's a lot more opportunity for more serious budget negotiations. Both parties demonstrated that, yes, they can actually work together. And I think that, whenever you see both sides working together, you get a sort of residual bump for a little while. People stay in a good mood, and they're more willing to work together on other things.

MODERATOR: But wasn't there some dispute over how much this program would save? The Congressional Budget Office numbers didn't exactly sync up with what proponents were saying.

ADAMS: That's true, but when was the last time the CBO and members of Congress were on the same page? (laughter) What proponents are saying now is, you take what you can get, and even the least optimistic projections were fairly sizable in terms of how much this program could save.

MODERATOR: And Brian Stewart, law professor at Hudson University, this brings up the question: Have we actually seen the last of the debate over this bill?

STEWART: Not in the least. There are some questions of constitutionality to be settled here. You have a few people now coming out and saying that this legislation may violate the Fourth Amendment's right to be secure in one's person. This is a major piece of legislation. My guess would be that this will go to the Supreme Court.

FELLOWES: Because it's a big bill?

STEWART: That's exactly right. Remember, they do get to choose their cases. I don't want to say the Court wants to make social policy, but on something as consequential as this, they will want to weigh in on it. To let this sort of thing go by, they would open themselves up to considerable criticism.

MODERATOR: A debate we'll be having for a little while longer, it seems. After the break, we'll come back and turn the focus to foreign policy. Is peace with North Korea on the horizon? Right after these messages.

(commercial)