

# STRENGTHEN SOCIAL SECURITY

**...don't cut it.**

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## **New Colorado Poll Shows 71 Percent of Likely 2012 Voters Oppose Cuts to Social Security**

**Washington, DC**— In a [new poll released today](#), 71 percent of likely voters in Colorado's 2012 election oppose cutting Social Security benefits in order to reduce the federal deficit. Those opposed include 83 percent of Democrats, 61 percent of Republicans, 69 percent of Independents, and 53 percent of Tea Party supporters.

The poll was released as leaders in Washington debate how to reduce the federal deficit and many members of Congress call for having all options on the table, including deep cuts to Social Security. Colorado U.S. Senators Michael Bennet and Mark Udall have not declared where they stand on cutting Social Security benefits or taking it off the table because it does not contribute to the deficit.

The poll found that Social Security could be a real wedge issue in 2012 U.S. House of Representatives races. Over six in ten Colorado voters say they would be less likely to vote for a House candidate who supports cutting benefits to reduce the deficit, including nearly six in ten voters in every region of the state.

The Social Security issue also has the potential to swing voters: 51 percent of independents and 49 percent of those who are undecided in the generic 2012 House ballot indicate they would be **much less** likely to vote for a candidate who supports cutting Social Security benefits to reduce the deficit. Thirty percent of those polled said they were undecided in 2012 House contests.

"This poll shows that voters are clear in their thinking: Don't cut Social Security benefits, don't reduce the COLA and don't raise the retirement age," said **Max Richtman, Acting CEO of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare**, which has 220,000 members in Colorado. "They also agree on something else: Congress should raise the Social Security tax cap so that people making more than \$107,000 a year pay taxes on all of their wages just like everyone else who makes less than that amount has to do. This will guarantee that full Social Security benefits can be paid for the next 75 years. These findings also suggest that members of Congress who recently voted to end Medicare as we know it by turning coverage over to private insurance companies and who voted to make deep cuts to Medicaid, two programs that seniors' heavily depend on, could suffer a voter backlash."

"More than [630,000 Coloradans receive Social Security](#) and nearly half of them are lifted out of poverty by the program's modest benefits," said **Coloradan and Alliance for Retired Americans Activist Vivian Stovall**. "Social Security is based on a promise that if you pay in

then you earn the right to guaranteed benefits. Our elected officials in Washington need to be sure that promise is kept.”

“Social Security does not contribute a penny to the deficit, in fact it has a huge surplus,” said Eric Kingson, Co-Chair of the Strengthen Social Security Campaign. “This is money that belongs to all of us who contributed our entire working lives so that we could retire with dignity. Voters want politicians in Washington to keep their hands off Social Security.”

Significant findings in the poll include:

- When likely Colorado voters were asked “**Would you favor or oppose cutting Social Security benefits in order to reduce the federal deficit?**” a total of 76% opposed cutting benefits. Below is a breakdown of those opposed to the cuts by their political affiliation:  
**Tea Party Supporters**...53% opposed to any Social Security benefit cuts  
**Republicans**.....61% opposed to any Social Security benefit cuts  
**Independents**.....69% opposed to any Social Security benefit cuts  
**Democrats**.....83% opposed to any Social Security benefit cuts  
**TOTALS**.....**71% opposed to cutting Social Security benefits**
- Strong majorities of Colorado voters oppose three specific proposals that would cut Social Security benefits by:
  - Raising the retirement age: 56% oppose
  - Changing the COLA formula in a way that reduces the amount beneficiaries receive: 59% oppose
  - Reducing benefits for people earning above \$60,000 – typically what a proposal to “means-test” Social Security would do: 62% oppose
- In a candidate comparison, by a margin of 70 percent to 25 percent Colorado voters agree with the House candidate who says that Social Security did not cause the federal deficit and should not be on the table for cuts to address the deficit because it is funded by and belongs to the people who have worked hard and paid into the program, over the candidate who calls for cutting Social Security to avoid burdening future generations with debt.
- There is strong bipartisan support among Colorado voters for lifting the cap to impose Social Security taxes on all wages above \$106,800 and requiring both employees and employers to pay (67 percent favor, 58 percent strongly). This was supported by large majorities of Republicans (64 percent), Independents (58 percent), and Tea Party supporters (64 percent). By a margin of 53 percent to 23 percent voters say they would be more likely to vote for a Senate candidate who supports requiring employees and employers to pay Social Security taxes on all wages above \$106,800.

The survey of 502 likely voters was conducted March 3-7, 2011, by the national polling firm of Lake Research Partners; it has a margin of error of +/- 4.4 percent. The poll was paid for by Social Security Works, a national organization that convenes the [Strengthen Social Security Campaign](#), which is comprised of more than 300 national and state organizations representing more than 50 million Americans from many of the nation’s leading aging, labor, disability, women’s, children, consumer, civil rights and equality organizations; the [National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare Foundation](#), which has 220,000 members in Colorado; and the [Alliance for Retired Americans](#), which has 32,000 members in Colorado.

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