

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 28, 2005

The Honorable George W. Bush  
President  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr President:

We were appalled to hear Ways & Means Chairman Bill Thomas propose Sunday on "Meet the Press" that Social Security benefits should be based on race and gender. Chairman Thomas said that Congress "needs to consider how many years of retirement you get based on your race" and that women should receive fewer benefits each year because they tend to live longer than men. Asked if Congress would accept such an idea, Chairman Thomas didn't seem to know the answer.

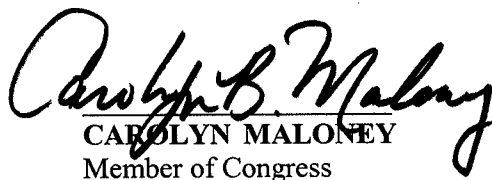
The answer is "No," Mr. President. We, the undersigned members of Congress, will not accept a Social Security formula that is based on race or gender. This idea is unfair, it is unjust, it is profoundly anti-American. We call on you to repudiate it. We request a meeting with you to give you our views in person and receive your response.

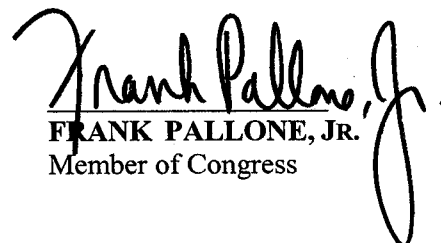
Cutting benefits to those who need them most is counter to the core principles on which Social Security was founded. That great program is the financial safety net for all working Americans in their old age. All workers have earned their benefits and are entitled to them regardless of gender or race. Social Security's formulas are race and gender neutral and must remain so. To propose that women should receive fewer benefits because they tend to live longer denies benefits to retired women workers who depend on them to survive and is fundamentally wrong. To advocate that minorities should receive different benefits on the basis of their race is repugnant in a society that has renounced racial discrimination and where all persons are equal before the law.

Chairman Thomas' proposal attacks the most vulnerable among us. Retired women workers are twice as likely as men to live below the poverty line and to depend on Social Security as their sole means of support. For African-Americans, Social Security cuts the poverty rate from 59 percent to 21 percent.

Sunday was not the first time Chairman Thomas has proposed basing Social Security on race and gender, but it was the first time he made clear on national TV that he will advance this outrageous agenda in the Congress. It is time to make clear that Congress will not accept it. Nor should you or your Administration. Chairman Thomas' proposal goes against everything for which this great nation stands, and it is counter to our deepest moral values. We call on you to renounce clearly and unambiguously any change to Social Security benefits premised on race or gender.

Sincerely,

  
CAROLYN MALONEY  
Member of Congress

  
FRANK PALLONE, JR.  
Member of Congress

Nancy Pelosi  
NANCY PELOSI  
Member of Congress

Diane E. Watson  
DIANE WATSON  
Member of Congress

Tammy Baldwin  
TAMMY BALDWIN  
Member of Congress

Michael H. Michaud  
MICHAEL MICHAUD  
Member of Congress

William Jefferson  
WILLIAM JEFFERSON  
Member of Congress

Gene Green  
GENE GREEN  
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings  
ALCEE HASTINGS  
Member of Congress

Steve Israel  
STEVE ISRAEL  
Member of Congress

Dale G. Kildee  
DALE KILDEE  
Member of Congress

Maxine Waters  
MAXINE WATERS  
Member of Congress



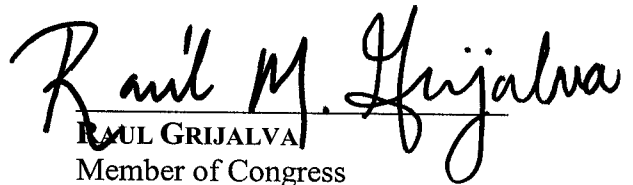
LYNN WOOLSEY  
Member of Congress



GARY ACKERMAN  
Member of Congress



JOE BACA  
Member of Congress



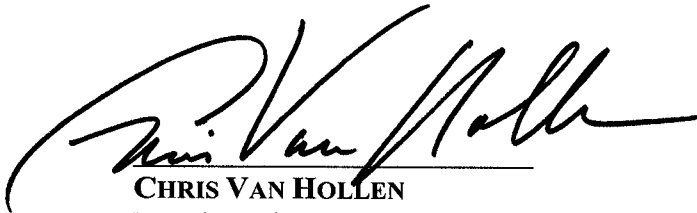
RAUL GRIJALVA  
Member of Congress



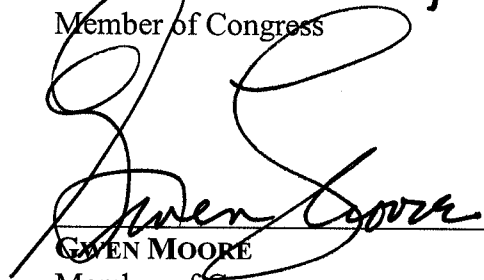
SHEILA JACKSON-LEE  
Member of Congress



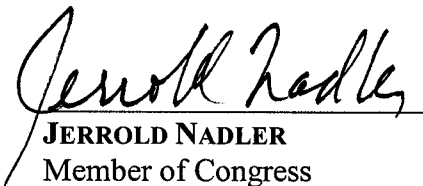
BARBARA LEE  
Member of Congress



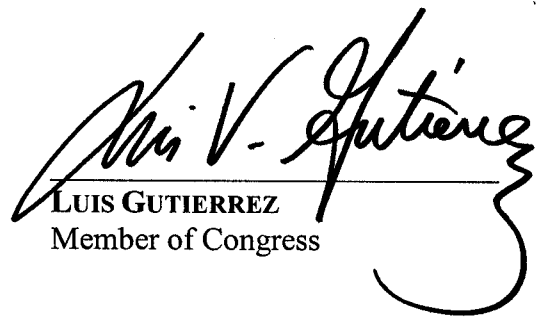
CHRIS VAN HOLLEN  
Member of Congress



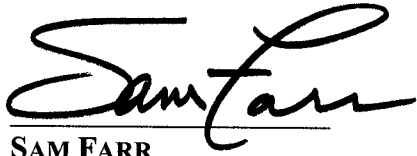
GWEN MOORE  
Member of Congress



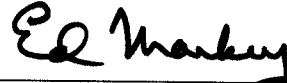
JERROLD NADLER  
Member of Congress



LUIS GUTIERREZ  
Member of Congress



**SAM FARR**  
Member of Congress



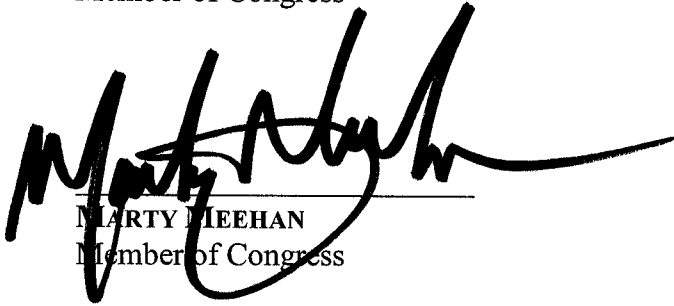
**ED MARKEY**  
Member of Congress



**BOBBY RUSH**  
Member of Congress



**TIM BISHOP**  
Member of Congress



**MARTY MEEHAN**  
Member of Congress



**ROBERT MENENDEZ**  
Member of Congress



**MIKE HONDA**  
Member of Congress



**DONALD M. PAYNE**  
Member of Congress

*Tom Lantos*

**TOM LANTOS**  
Member of Congress

*Henry Waxman*

**HENRY WAXMAN**  
Member of Congress

*Eddie Bernice Johnson*

**EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON**  
Member of Congress

*Julia Carson*

**JULIA CARSON**  
Member of Congress

*Al Green*

**AL GREEN**  
Member of Congress

*Maurice Hinchey*

**MAURICE HINCHEY**  
Member of Congress

*Loretta Sanchez*

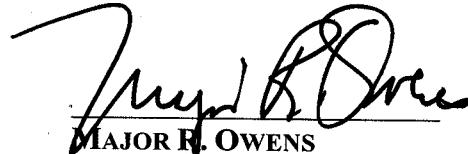
**LORETTA SANCHEZ**  
Member of Congress

*Elijah Cummings*

**ELIJAH CUMMINGS**  
Member of Congress



LINDA SANCHEZ  
Member of Congress



MAJOR R. OWENS  
Member of Congress



ARTUR DAVIS  
Member of Congress