

Organizing Toolkit

**CELEBRATING 75 YEARS OF
SOCIAL SECURITY**



**Renew the Promise
No Benefit Cuts & No Privatization**



**CELEBRATING 75 YEARS
OF SOCIAL SECURITY**

Dear Party Host,

Thank you for agreeing to host a 75th Birthday Celebration for Social Security. With the deficit hawks gearing up to fight for a cut in benefits and to privatize the program, your work is critical to protecting and strengthening Social Security.

You are one of many hosts from coast to coast taking action to support Social Security, and we want to make sure you have everything you need to succeed.

This Social Security Birthday Celebration Toolkit provides ideas for planning your celebration, and the nuts and bolts for making it go off without a hitch.

If you need further assistance, you can email Melissa Byrne at mbyrne@socialsecurity-works.org or reach her on the phone at 202.587.1606.

Your Toolkit Includes:

- 1. Ideas for your Social Security Birthday Celebration**
- 2. Customizable event flyer**
- 3. An email alert to promote the event**
- 4. A sample letter asking elected officials to attend the event**

Shortly, you will get a media toolkit to help you get press coverage for your event, fact sheets about the Social Security issue, and a report showing the benefits of Social Security to your state and congressional district.

Thank you from the team at

STRENGTHEN SOCIAL SECURITY
...don't cut it.



**CELEBRATING 75 YEARS
OF SOCIAL SECURITY**

Table of Contents

- **The Urgency of Fighting to Protect and Strengthen Social Security**
- **The Winning Message on Social Security**
- **Event Ideas for Your Social Security Birthday Celebration**
- **Sample Email Announcement**
- **Sample Event Flyer**
- **Sample Letter for Inviting Elected Officials to an Event**
- **Check List for Your Social Security Birthday Celebration**
- **Sample Press Conference Agenda**
- **Sample Forum/Roundtable Agenda**
- **Sample State Report**
- **Recipe for Social Security American Flag Birthday Cake**
- **Sign-In Sheet**
- **Sample Thank You Letter to Elected Official**
- **Strengthen Social Security Campaign Members**
- **Strengthen Social Security Campaign Principles**



CELEBRATING 75 YEARS
OF SOCIAL SECURITY

The Urgency of Fighting to Protect and Strengthen Social Security

On August 14th, let's use the occasion of Social Security's 75th birthday to spark a national movement to aggressively defend and strengthen the program and the protections it provides to all Americans, young and old and everyone in between.

Social Security is once again under attack, this time from deficit hawks who want to cut benefits and privatize the program. A national coalition of more than 50 organizations – the Strengthen Social Security Campaign – has formed to fight this assault, and we are organizing birthday parties across the country. We need your help to make this happen.

Why We Need You to Host a Social Security Birthday Party

Remind members of Congress and the general public that Social Security belongs to the people who worked hard and made contributions to it. Social Security should not be cut; the retirement age should not be raised. Social Security is guaranteed because everyone pays into it. No one should take it away from the American people.

Advocate for strengthening Social Security. We need to make sure that Social Security will be there for our children and future generations -- that it will continue to be the nation's most reliable retirement and disability insurance, and it will continue to protect nearly every child in the event of death or disability of a parent.

Activate Your Membership! Members of Congress will stand up to defend Social Security if the grassroots shows them the way. They need to hear from your membership loud and clear in August to ensure their support during crucial votes later this year. Hosting a Birthday Party is a member- and community-friendly event to engage a large audience. By activating your membership in August, you are preparing them to take action in the fall.

Show the Media that Americans from all walks of life are standing up to strengthen Social Security. Birthday Parties with cake, candles, a huge Birthday Card, a member of Congress, local leaders and people who depend on Social Security will get covered by newspapers, blogs and local television. The parties will deliver the message that Social Security must not be cut and push the campaign forward.

Sound the Alarm! The threat to Social Security is real, but the public is yet to be engaged. We need people from coast to coast to make strengthening Social Security their number one priority until we win this fight.



The Winning Message on Social Security

A Promise to Strengthen Social Security

Social Security belongs to the people who have worked hard all their lives and contributed to it. Social Security is a promise that must not be broken. If you pay in, then you earn the right to benefits for yourself, your spouse and your dependent children when you retire, experience a severe disability, or die.

We need to strengthen Social Security, not cut it. That is why we oppose any cuts to Social Security benefits, including increasing the retirement age. We also oppose any effort to privatize Social Security, in whole or in part.

This message will be on the large birthday card that will be sent to you for your event.



CELEBRATING 75 YEARS
OF SOCIAL SECURITY

Event Ideas for Your Social Security Birthday Celebration

There are several ways to celebrate Social Security's 75th Birthday. Below are a few ideas designed to get press coverage, involve your membership and community members, and advocate for strengthening Social Security. Additionally, we have included a few strategy tips and resources for your event.

EVENT IDEAS

1. **Birthday Party:** A party event with speakers, a birthday card, and cake.
2. **Press Conference:** A brief event with your member of Congress where you declare your support for strengthening Social Security.
3. **Roundtable:** A moderated issues discussion on Social Security.
4. **Senior Center Presentation:** An event at a local senior center on Social Security.
5. **Intergenerational Forums:** An event sponsored by communities of faith and children, senior, and disability groups to talk about how Social Security protects all generations in your community.
6. **Town Hall Forum:** A larger event with several speakers and a question and answer session.
7. **Rally:** An event with several speakers and a large crowd and members holding rally signs.
8. **Cake and Card Delivery to Congressional Offices:** If your member of Congress declines your invitation, you can organize an event at his or her office where you bring a large Birthday Card and Cake.

RESOURCES AND STRATEGIES

1. **Giant Birthday Card:** This colorful 2 x 3 foot birthday card will be available for your events. Participants will be asked to sign the back of the card, which will state that they oppose Social Security benefit cuts and privatization. To get a card register at www.strengthensocialsecurity.org.
2. **State and Congressional District Report:** This will provide a rich set of facts about how much Social Security benefits your state and its congressional districts; see a sample of the type of information that will be provided later in this Toolkit.
3. **Media Opportunities:** The fight to strengthen Social Security needs to be on every news show, on the front page of newspapers, and in blogs across the country. How will your event have a hook for the media? In deciding the type of event you will hold, you should consider what will get the most media coverage.
4. **Members of Congress:** Many members of Congress want to hold district events in August to celebrate Social Security. We urge you to invite them to draw more media coverage, to get them to become champions of the cause or to declare their unequivocal support for strengthening Social Security.



**CELEBRATING 75 YEARS
OF SOCIAL SECURITY**

Sample Email Announcement

To be most effective an Email message should be brief, sent out a week before the event, and followed up the day before the event with a short reminder. Remember to include contact information for the event organizer.

Subject: Protect Social Security from Benefit Cuts; Celebrate its 75th Birthday*

Body:

Dear _____:

Social Security is turning 75 on August 14, and we are throwing a party to celebrate! You are invited to attend the event on [date and time] at [location].

Speakers and organizations participating in this event include:

Celebrating this milestone for Social Security is important as there is a growing chorus among politicians and the media to cut Social Security benefits in order to reduce the deficit or to privatize the program, each of which will hurt seniors, people with disabilities and children. But, you know Social Security did not cause the deficit – it is paid for with special taxes on your wages. If you pay, in then you and your family earn the right to benefits.

We are excited to come together in our community to honor Social Security and be on the front lines of fighting to strengthen this vital program. We look forward to you joining us on [date and time] at [location]. Please contact our organizer [name] at [phone/email] if you have any questions.

You are welcome and encouraged to bring your family and friends!

Thank you,

The Organizers

***If your member of Congress or another VIP is attending your event, consider using the following subject line: Join Rep. ____ to Celebrate Social Security.**



Wish Social Security a Happy Birthday!

Social Security is a promise made to all generations. It belongs to you, your spouse and your dependent children, because you have worked hard and contributed to it. If you pay in, then you and your family earn the right to collect benefits when you retire, experience a severe disability or die.

But there are some in Washington and on Wall Street who want to break that promise – by cutting Social Security’s benefits and by privatizing the program. We can’t let that happen. Join us as we celebrate Social Security’s first 75 years and make sure that the promise is kept for the next 75 years!

WHO:

WHEN:

WHERE:

CONTACT:

Insert your organization’s logo here



**CELEBRATING 75 YEARS
OF SOCIAL SECURITY**

Sample Letter for Inviting Elected Officials to an Event

[Date]

The Honorable [First Name, Last Name]

[Address]

[City, State ZIP]

Via fax: (XXX) XXX-XXXX

Attn: [Scheduler's Name]

Dear Representative or Senator [Last Name]:

August 14, 2010 marks the 75th anniversary of Social Security. [Your organization's name or your coalition's name] plans to organize a celebration to mark this anniversary in [city/town] on [date and time] and we would like you to join us. If you cannot make it on this date, we would like to find a mutual date during the August recess to celebrate together.

The planned event format is [a news conference, a birthday party, a meeting with our members, etc.] At the event we will be releasing a new study that shows how much Social Security benefits residents of [state name] and of your congressional district, which we will make available to you in advance. We will also be signing a large birthday card with the message:

A Promise to Strengthen Social Security: Social Security is a promise made to all generations. It belongs to you, your spouse and your dependent children, because you have worked hard and contributed to it. If you pay in, then you and your family earn the right to collect benefits when you retire, experience a severe disability or die. We need to strengthen Social Security, not cut it. That is why we oppose any cuts to Social Security benefits, including increasing the retirement age. We also oppose any effort to privatize Social Security, in whole or in part.

The location for this event is _____. Other speakers include _____.

Events like this will take place in August across the country. They are designed to highlight that Social Security belongs to the people who worked hard all their lives and contributed to it, and that it is a promise that must not be broken.

To ensure that these events make the greatest impact on this national and local debate, we will promote this celebration to the media, and we expect to get good coverage. Your attendance will help us get even better press coverage and larger crowds, and we hope you will accept this invitation.

Please feel free to have your staff contact [contact name and info here], with any questions that you may have about this event. We expect that this will be a great event, and we're looking forward to working with you as we continue the planning.

Sincerely,



CELEBRATING 75 YEARS
OF SOCIAL SECURITY

Check List for Your Social Security Birthday Celebration

BEFORE:

- ☐ Plan ahead! Several weeks in advance, plan what kind of event you want to hold and who you want to speak at it. There are examples of events in this toolkit.
- ☐ Reserve an accessible space that can accommodate the crowd you expect to attend.
- ☐ Register your event at www.strengthensocialsecurity.org.
- ☐ Order your Birthday Card at www.strengthensocialsecurity.org. Obtain an easel to display the card and buy Sharpie markers for guests to use to sign the card.
- ☐ As soon as possible, send out an invitation to your member of Congress. Follow up with a call to the scheduler. See sample invitation in the toolkit.
- ☐ Order a birthday cake with the Social Security “75” logo. Or, you can bake your own cake and decorate it for the party. See recipe in the toolkit.
- ☐ Draft an agenda for your event. See sample Press Conference and Forum/Roundtable in the toolkit.
- ☐ Help prepare each speaker’s remarks to be sure everyone is on message.
- ☐ Brainstorm a list of people you want to invite and ask other organizations to invite their members.
- ☐ Check out the list of campaign members in this toolkit to reach out to.
- ☐ Send an email invitation about a week before the event and a follow up email the day before. See sample email in this toolkit.
- ☐ Make and post flyers in high traffic areas around town (libraries, malls, coffee shops, senior centers, community centers). See sample flyer in the toolkit.

- ❓ Create and print sign-in sheets to use at the event. See sample in the toolkit.
- ❓ Put together an event team with the following captains: greeter, sign-in, food, set-up, and clean-up. If possible, recruit a volunteer to video the event. A flip camera is fine.
- ❓ Designate a media point person to assist with media outreach.
- ❓ Add your event to your newspapers, television, and radio stations calendar of events.
- ❓ Create a list of media contacts from local papers (dailies and weeklies), television stations (producers), radio stations, and bloggers.
- ❓ Send a media advisory two or three days before the event and have a press release ready to send the day of the event. A sample media advisory and a press release will be provided later.
- ❓ Copy your state's Social Security report form which will be provided to you a few days before August 14th.

DAY OF:

- ❓ Send the press release first thing in the morning. See media section of the toolkit for more info.
- ❓ Arrive at the venue an hour and a half early to set up.
- ❓ Have your volunteers in place with materials thirty minutes before event start time.
- ❓ Have every guest sign-in; try to get email addresses and phone numbers.
- ❓ Make sure speakers are ready to go at their given time.
- ❓ Ask every guest to sign the Social Security Birthday Card.
- ❓ If your member of Congress attends, present the Birthday Card to him or her.
- ❓ Cut the cake and enjoy the refreshments.
- ❓ Fax sign-in sheets to 202.955.5606; send video to mbyrne@socialsecurity-works.org.



**CELEBRATING 75 YEARS
OF SOCIAL SECURITY**

Sample Press Conference Agenda

**August XX in XX City
1:00pm – 2:00pm**

1:00PM WELCOME & OVERVIEW

Staff / Principal / Local Leadership

1:05PM SOCIAL SECURITY – AFTER 75 YEARS - MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER

Member of Congress / Principal

1:15PM THE BENEFITS OF SOCIAL SECURITY in [STATE/CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT]

Release & Discussion of State/Congressional Districts Report
by Staff / Principal / Leader

1:20PM THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL SECURITY ON AMERICANS- A PERSONAL TESTIMONY

Personal Story (Senior, Person with Disabilities, Low-income Person, or
Widow/Widower)

1:25PM CALL TO ACTION

Staff / Principal / Local Leadership

1:35PM SING HAPPY BIRTHDAY, CAKE CUTTING, BIRTHDAY CARD SIGNING

Photo Op w/ Member of Congress



**CELEBRATING 75 YEARS
OF SOCIAL SECURITY**

Sample Forum/Roundtable Agenda

August XX in XX City

1:00pm – 2:30pm

1:00PM WELCOME & OVERVIEW

Staff / Principal / Local Leadership

1:05PM A HISTORY OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAM

Local Issue Expert / Academic / Staff

1:15PM THE BENEFIT OF SOCIAL SECURITY in [STATE/CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT]

Release & Discussion of State/Congressional District Report

Staff / Principal / Local Leadership

1:25PM THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL SECURITY ON AMERICANS- A PERSONAL TESTIMONY

Personal Story (Senior, Person with Disabilities, Low-income Person, or
Widow/Widower)

1:30PM THE FISCAL COMMISSION & THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL SECURITY

Member of Congress, Staff, Principal

1:55PM CALL TO ACTION

Staff / Principal / Local Leadership

2:10PM Q & A and Closing

Staff / Principal / Local Leadership

2:30PM SING HAPPY BIRTHDAY, CAKE CUTTING, BIRTHDAY CARD SIGNING

Photo Op w/ Member of Congress



**CELEBRATING 75 YEARS
OF SOCIAL SECURITY**

Sample State Report: Social Security Works for New Hampshire

Below is a sample of the information that will be available on your state for August 14th events. Data subject to change- do not use.

Social Security Works for New Hampshire's Economy

- There are 237,498 New Hampshire residents receiving Social Security benefits: 19 percent of the state's population.
- Social Security payments into New Hampshire were \$3 billion in 2008, 5 percent of state GDP (the total value of all goods and services produced).
- Between 2005 and 2009, Social Security's share of New Hampshire's GDP grew at a rate of 7.9 percent, rising from 4.6 percent to 5 percent.

Social Security Works for New Hampshire Seniors

- Social Security supports 12.7 percent of New Hampshire's population through retirement benefits, including for spouses and eligible children of retirees, a total of 164,840 people.
- The median annual benefit received by a retired worker in New Hampshire is \$14,328.

Social Security Works for New Hampshire Women

- Social Security provides benefits to 121,837 women in New Hampshire, 8.3 percent of the state's population.
- Women make up 57 percent of Social Security beneficiaries aged 65 or older.

Social Security Works for New Hampshire Residents with Disabilities

- Social Security provides disability benefits, including for spouses and children of disabled workers, to 3.8 percent of New Hampshire's population, a total of 49,459 people.
- The median annual benefit received by a disabled worker in New Hampshire is \$14,172.
- Disability beneficiaries make up 20.8 percent of New Hampshire's Social Security recipients.

Social Security Works for New Hampshire Widow(er)s

- Social Security provides survivors' benefits, including for spouses, parents and children of deceased workers, to 1.8 percent of New Hampshire's population, a total of 23,739 people.
- The median annual benefit received by a widow(er) in New Hampshire is \$12,036.
- Survivor beneficiaries make up 10 percent of New Hampshire's Social Security recipients.

Social Security Works for New Hampshire Children

- 98 percent of New Hampshire's 292,764 children are insured against the loss of income by a parent or caregiver due to death or disability.
- Social Security provides benefits to 5.3 percent of New Hampshire children, a total of 15,471.

Social Security Works for People of Color in New Hampshire

- 7.2 percent of New Hampshire's African American residents receive Social Security benefits, which is more than six times their share of the state's population.



**CELEBRATING 75 YEARS
OF SOCIAL SECURITY**

Recipe for Social Security American Flag Birthday Cake

Recipe for White Sheet Cake

Pre-heat oven to 375 degrees

Ingredients:

2 c. sugar	1 c. buttermilk
1/2 c. shortening	1 tsp. soda
3/4 c. buttermilk	1 tsp. vanilla
2 egg whites	1 c. brown sugar
Dash of salt	1 stick butter
2 3/4 c. flour	1/4 c. evaporated milk

Combine sugar, shortening, buttermilk, egg whites and salt. Mix well. Add flour, butter, milk, soda and vanilla. Bake at 375 degrees until done, 15-18 minutes.

Flag Decoration

Ingredients:

2 pints of strawberries
1 1/3 c. of blueberries
1 tub of whipped topping (or white icing)

Instructions:

Slice 1 cup of strawberries, set aside. Halve remaining strawberries, set aside. Top cake (in pan) with 1 cup sliced strawberries, 1 cup blueberries and all of the whipped topping. Arrange remaining strawberry halves and blueberries on whipped topping to create a flag design. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Note: Increase numbers of cakes depending on size of your events



Sign-In Sheet

**CELEBRATING 75 YEARS
OF SOCIAL SECURITY**

Organizer's Name: _____

Event Location: _____

Fax to Melissa: 202.955.5606

Please Print Clearly

	Name	Email	Phone	Address	City
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					



CELEBRATING 75 YEARS
OF SOCIAL SECURITY

Sample Thank You Letter to Elected Officials

[DATE]

The Honorable [First Name, Last Name]

[Address]

[City, State ZIP]

Via fax: (XXX) XXX-XXXX

Attn: [Scheduler's Name]

Dear Representative or Senator [Last Name]:

Thank you for taking the time recently to participate in our Social Security birthday celebration. Your being there made the event a [great] success.

[Highlight a few results]: Number of people who attended, amount of press coverage, etc.

The fight to ensure that Social Security will be there for today's retirees, persons with disability, children who have lost a parent or whose parent experiences a severe disability, and for future generations, has just begun. Social Security is America's most important, life, disability and retirement insurance. It must remain so. We look forward to working with you in the coming months to ensure that the Fiscal Commission does not agree to any Social Security benefit cuts and, if it does, that Congress votes to oppose such cuts.

Again, on behalf of [your organization/coalition] in your [congressional district/State], I thank you for your support, and we look forward to working together on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Name

Title

[Organization]

STRENGTHEN SOCIAL SECURITY

...don't cut it.

Campaign Members

List in formation as of July 23, 2010

Bold denotes Steering Committee Member

National Organizations

AFL-CIO

All Unions Committee for Single Payer Health Care--HR
676

Alliance for Retired Americans

American Association of University Women

American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees

American Federation of Teachers

American Network of Community Options and
Resources

American Postal Workers Union

Americans for Democratic Action

Campaign for America's Future

Center for Community Change

The Claude Pepper Center

Coalition of Labor Union Women

Coalition on Human Needs

Common Cause

Communication Workers of America

Retired Members Council

Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund

Democracy for America

Dēmos

Economic Policy Institute

Feminist Majority

Food Research Action Center

Frances Perkins Center

Generations United

Institute for Puerto Rican / Hispanic Elderly

International Brotherhood of Teamsters

International Federation of Professional & Technical
Engineers (IFPTE)

International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace &
Agricultural Implement Workers of America

League of Rural Voters

MoveOn.org Political Action

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

National Association for Hispanic Elderly

National Association of Social Workers

National Collaboration for Youth

National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare

National Council of Negro Women

National Council of Women's Organizations

National Education Association

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

National Hispanic Council on Aging

National Human Services Assembly

National Nurses United

National Organization for Women

National Senior Citizens Law Center

National Women's Law Center

OWL - The Voice of Midlife and Older Women

Pension Rights Center

ProgressNow

Service Employees International Union

Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE)

Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)

Social Security Works

The Arc

United Cerebral Palsy

United States Student Association

USAction

Voices for America's Children

Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW)

Women Employed

STRENGTHEN SOCIAL SECURITY

...don't cut it.

Campaign Principles

We stand together in support of Social Security, a promise made to Americans of all generations. Social Security represents the best of American values – reward for hard work, honoring our parents and caring for our neighbors. Social Security belongs to the workers and their families who have worked hard, paid taxes in, and earned its benefits. Social Security did not cause the federal deficit, and its benefits should not be cut to reduce the deficit. The federal government found the money to bail out Wall Street; it must find the money to pay what it owes to Social Security. Today's and tomorrow's beneficiaries – children, people with disabilities, widows, widowers, and retired workers – deserve no less.

In this, Social Security's 75th Anniversary year, we are united in support of the following principles:

1. Social Security has a surplus of \$2.6 trillion, which it has loaned to the federal government. Social Security did not cause the federal deficit. Its benefits should not be cut to reduce the deficit.
2. Social Security, which has stood the test of time, should not be privatized in whole or in part.
3. Social Security is insurance and should not be means-tested. Because workers pay for it, they should receive it regardless of their income or savings.
4. Social Security is fully funded for more than 25 years; thereafter it has sufficient funds to meet 75 percent of promised benefits. To reassure Americans that Social Security will be there for them, Congress should act in the coming few years outside the context of deficit reduction to close this funding gap by requiring those who are most able to afford it to pay somewhat more.
5. Social Security's retirement age, already scheduled to increase from 65 to 67, should not be raised further. That would be a benefit cut that places the greatest hardship on older Americans who are in physically demanding jobs, or are otherwise unable to find or keep employment.
6. Social Security, whose average benefit is \$13,000 in 2010, provides vital protection against the loss of wages as the result of disability, death, or old age. This protection covers not only adults but also 98 percent of all children in the event of death or disability of a parent. Those benefits should not be reduced, including by changes to the cost of living adjustment or the benefit formula.
7. Social Security's benefits should be increased for those who are most disadvantaged. The benefits, which are very important to virtually all workers and their families, are particularly crucial to those who are disadvantaged.