

FREEDOM FOR ARNALDO RAMOS
LAUZERIQUE

HON. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 10, 2005

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about Arnaldo Ramos Lauzerique, a political prisoner in totalitarian Cuba.

Mr. Ramos Lauzerique is a member of the Cuban Institute of Independent Economists and the Assembly to Promote Civil Society. He believes that Cuba should be and will be free from the nightmare that is the Castro regime. He believes that the Cuban people are entitled to human rights, democracy, and freedom from tyranny. Because he believes in freedom and because he actively and peacefully advocates for liberty, Mr. Ramos Lauzerique has been targeted by the despotic regime.

In March 2003, as part of the tyrant's heinous island wide crackdown on peaceful, pro-democracy activists, Mr. Ramos Lauzerique was arrested by the regime. In a sham trial, he was sentenced to 18 years in the totalitarian gulag.

Mr. Ramos Lauzerique is over 60 years old and languishing in the revolting, hellish gulag. However, being confined in these inhuman conditions has not stopped him from continuing to demand justice for the people of Cuba and his fellow political prisoners. Amnesty International reports that Mr. Ramos Lauzerique has participated in at least two hunger strikes while imprisoned in Castro's dungeon. He has undertaken these strikes to bring attention to the repulsive squalor of the gulag, the lack of medical attention, and the barbaric punishment cells; all in defiance of the machinery of repression that has unjustly confined him in these repugnant conditions.

Mr. Speaker, it remains categorically unacceptable that men and women who demand freedom from tyranny are locked in the dungeons of tyrannical monsters. Here, under the dome that represents modern democracy, we must continue to demand the liberation of all who suffer in the darkness of totalitarianism. As we continue to exercise our democratic rights, let us never forget those who are struggling to liberate their own nations. My Colleagues, we must demand the immediate release of Arnaldo Ramos Lauzerique and every prisoner of conscience locked in Castro's totalitarian gulag.

INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 750, THE
SOCIAL SECURITY GUARANTEE
PLUS ACT OF 2005

HON. E. CLAY SHAW, JR.

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 10, 2005

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, whether we live in prosperous or uncertain times, American families need economic security—the kind of economic security that Social Security provides. For 70 years, Social Security has protected workers and their families from falling into poverty if a breadwinner retires, suffers disability, or dies. Social Security has endured, unlike many other government programs, because its architects designed it to be owned by workers and to treat all workers fairly.

Social Security has evolved over the decades, strengthening its protections and finances along the way. However, our nation's demographics and economics are fundamentally changing, and Social Security's ability to continue meeting its promises is threatened.

The Social Security Guarantee Plus Plan I am introducing today will enable Social Security to continue fulfilling its vital role in the lives of all Americans.

First, the Guarantee Plus Plan keeps intact the Social Security safety net. Promised benefits, including cost of living increases, are guaranteed for people receiving benefits today, tomorrow and for all future generations.

Second, the plan treats all workers fairly. Workers have paid into the system, it's their money, and we must protect and enhance their investment. It's not fair to workers to raise their payroll taxes or lower their benefits. Nor is it fair for the government to tell workers to work longer. That's why my plan does not raise taxes, does not lower benefits, and does not change the retirement age.

Third, Social Security payroll taxes belong to the workers who paid them. My plan gives workers a real ownership stake in Social Security by allowing them to choose to receive a tax cut to invest directly in prudent, individually-selected, market investments. For the first time, a nation of savers, not the government, will own and control the assets backing Social Security. Should an individual die before becoming eligible, the balance of their money will be passed along to their heirs.

Fourth, under my plan, Social Security can be counted on for the next 75 years, and beyond. Real assets guarantee current and future benefits, establishing a sound and sustainable financial footing. No longer will there be a need to periodically increase taxes or lower benefits to keep the program working.

Beyond keeping these promises to all Americans, we must also do more to improve Social Security for the women of our nation. Because of their longer life expectancies and lower earnings, women are more likely to suffer poverty in old age. Social Security is a vital safety net for these women. In addition, because benefits are based on earnings, women are disadvantaged when they choose to stay home to raise their children. The Guarantee Plus Plan protects our daughters, our mothers, our aunts and our grandmothers, not only by securing the future of Social Security and guaranteeing full benefits, but also by enhancing benefits for widows, divorced spouses, and working mothers. These benefits become available immediately in my bill.

Here's how the Social Security Guarantee Plus Plan works. The plan guarantees full, promised, current law benefits for all workers, whether you are 6 or 65. Just as companies must back your pension plan with real assets, the Guarantee Plus Plan saves Social Security by setting aside real assets, not IOUs, to pre-fund benefits. These assets are saved in each worker's own account, thereby providing workers the opportunity to create real wealth for themselves and their families.

Workers who choose to participate will receive a refundable credit of up to 4% of their earnings to establish their own Social Security Guarantee Account. Workers, not the government, would select where to invest their Guarantee Account funds. The assets in these accounts would grow tax-free. No withdrawals would be permitted until a worker starts receiving benefits to ensure that the money is preserved for retirement.

At retirement or when the worker becomes disabled, a portion of the Guarantee Account is paid directly to the worker and the rest is used to help pay full, guaranteed Social Security benefits. But that's not all.

In addition to the much needed improvements in benefits for women I mentioned, my plan eliminates the retirement earnings penalty for all workers age 62 and older and reduces the so-called Government Pension Offset affecting spouse and survivor benefits to certain government workers.

Other plans may cost less, because they cut benefits or raise taxes. If our goal is to pay full promised benefits, boost women's benefits, and return Social Security to financial independence, the Guarantee Plus Plan is the lowest-cost proposal to date. The Guarantee Plus Plan does all this and pays for itself over the seventy five-year actuarial period, and that's confirmed by the Social Security Administration's Office of the Actuary in the 108th Congress. Even under the most conservative estimates, the Guarantee Plus Plan allows the new Social Security system to generate surplus cash in the latter part of the century, actually adding black ink to the government's bottom line.

My plan uses general revenues to fund the accounts. Even assuming borrowing for a transitional period, my plan pays back every borrowed dollar plus interest within the seventy five-year evaluation period. My plan also requires that Social Security surpluses created by the plan be dedicated to reducing publicly-held debt. Not only would we pay off the mortgage on Social Security, we would leave workers with substantial account balances and the federal government with excess cash.

The Guarantee Plus Plan also meets or exceeds all of the President's principles for reform—pays promised benefits to retirees, near-retirees, and all workers; no tax increases; no government investing; fully preserves disability and survivor benefits; offers individually controlled, voluntary personal retirement accounts that will augment Social Security. In addition, my plan is consistent with the first option to establish personal accounts recommended by the President's Commission to Strengthen Social Security.

President Bush has made the strengthening of Social Security now and for generations to come a top priority. Americans are showing their willingness to explore new ideas to strengthen this vital program, since the old ways must be improved upon for future generations. Now is the time for a straight-forward, honest and realistic discussion about the future of Social Security. The longer we wait to address the coming crisis, the more difficult and expensive the job will be down the line.

From the time of Social Security's enactment until today, the history of the program's evolution has demonstrated that while everybody has his or her own ideas on how to strengthen the program, progress toward that goal is only achieved through bipartisan cooperation. It's long past time for us to lay all our best thoughts on the table and work together to build on our success to make a stronger Social Security system that is an asset to all and not a liability to our children and grandchildren.

HONORING HENRIETTA SMITH AND
NINA KLEIN

HON. RALPH M. HALL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 10, 2005

Mr. HALL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the lives and the upcoming birthdays on February 14 of two outstanding Texas women, Henrietta C. Smith of Greenville, Texas, in the Fourth Congressional District, and her twin sister, Nina Lee Klein of Garland. Henrietta and Nina will celebrate their 85th birthdays with a family reunion in Austin, and I join their children, grandchildren, and many friends in recognition of this joyous occasion.

Henrietta and Nina have been excellent role models for their families and for young people who have known them. Henrietta obtained bachelor's and master's degrees from Texas