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SOCIAL SECURITY PRIVATIZATION COULD FORCE THOUSANDS IN TENNESSEE INTO POVERTY

New Report Shows Social Security Privatization Could Cut Guaranteed Benefits By \$182K, Placing 197K Older People In Tennessee At Risk Of Poverty

NASHVILLE, TENN. – Social Security privatization, embraced by **Sen. John McCain**, R-Ariz., would cut guaranteed benefits for thousands of future retirees in Tennessee by thousands of dollars, according to a new report released today by the research arm of the Campaign for America's Future. Today's report shows that more than 197,000 older people living in Tennessee would have a greater risk of falling into poverty, each losing more than \$182,000 over the course of their lifetimes, by the time a privatization plan like the one supported by Sen. McCain and **President Bush** is fully implemented.

Campaign for America's Future co-director **Roger Hickey**, whose organization has worked to defend and strengthen Social Security for more than a decade, said the popular program is at risk again.

"Social Security is very popular in Tennessee, but its guaranteed benefits are in the national crossfire again," said Hickey. "Sen. McCain has been very clear about his plans to push privatization again despite the public backlash President Bush faced when he pushed his scheme a few years ago. The conservative ideologues just won't stop trying to privatize Social Security."

In Tennessee, 1,139,000 people depend on their earned Social Security benefit every month, according to the Social Security Administration. Thousands of businesses and the state government also depend on the program. More than \$13.1 billion flows into the Tennessee economy from Social Security each year.

Diverting a portion of payroll taxes into risky private accounts could force many people below the poverty line. More than 952,000 people in Tennessee currently live in poverty, according to the U.S. Census. Meanwhile, 169,000 individuals depend on their guaranteed Social Security benefits for 90 percent or more of their income. The average Social Security check for individual retirees in Tennessee is \$1,058 per month; it takes \$867 per month to stay above the federal poverty line. These Social Security recipients would be close to the edge and vulnerable to rising food, housing and energy costs.

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****NOTE: Media representatives interested in a copy of today's Tennessee Social Security report should visit www.ourfuture.org/privatization. ****