

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1054

DENISE ANDREWS
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
2ND FRANKLIN DISTRICT
ATHOL, ERVING, GILL, GREENFIELD,
ORANGE, WARWICK

Committees on:
Revenue
Election Laws
Labor and Workforce Development

STATE HOUSE, ROOM 443
TEL. (617) 722-2460
FAX. (617) 626-0120
Denise.Andrews@MAhouse.gov

July 28, 2011

President Barack Hussein Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

I write you today to share my own perspective and that of many constituents that have contacted my office compelled by their anxiety over the debt ceiling negotiations and the bipartisan support to address the structural budget deficit. I speak not only for those who today depend on the modest retirement security they receive from Social Security and Medicare, but also those working people who dream to retire one day with dignity.

As a legislator, I have my own anxiety about how the uncertainty of the current stalemate and the looming deadline will affect cash flow between the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the federal agencies overseeing partnerships including Medicaid and food assistance. Many of my constituents have expressed worry that if the Treasury is unable to meet obligations like payments to Social Security recipients and salaries of military personnel, the communities of my district will be hard hit. Many of the efforts of my constituents to get back up after being bowled over by this Great Recession could be dashed in an instant. You have said that everything is on the table; those things that both sides hold dear must be in play. The debt ceiling issue must be resolved to avert this impending crisis, however, the future and integrity of Social Security and Medicare is not a bargaining chip.

On behalf of current retirees, I would remind you that our nation has the ability to increase revenues and to address spending without decreasing benefits of current Social Security and Medicare beneficiaries. There is no silver bullet to solve these problems. However, many

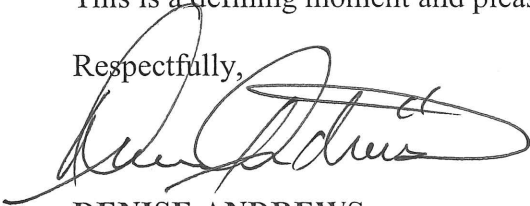
options if employed together would go a long way to close the structural deficit. If Social Security reforms are to be on the table, then I propose that those who have disproportionately benefited from the economy of recent decades have the means to help us get our budget back into balance. One very simple way to increase revenue is for Social Security to abolish the income cap on earnings subject to assessment. No such gap exists in the Medicare program and streamlining these policies is a common sense approach. If Medicare reforms are to be on the table, then I propose that finally, we also open up the Prescription Drug Program to competition. We might also consider getting tougher on crime. With the same determination that we have approached other scourges against society, we should mount an effective campaign to root out waste and fraud in the Medicare provider community.

The working people of today whose payroll deductions finance the payments and health insurance of current beneficiaries deserve to know with certainty that the full integrity of Social Security and Medicare will be there when they reach full retirement age. The support for robust retirement benefits is unwavering in our society. In poll after poll, voters of all stripes say, "do not touch Social Security and Medicare."

Respectfully, I ask that you do not yield on these national treasures. Making such a commitment is fully within your ability. Together we have made similar commitments to other national priorities, such as preserving nature for future generations, a value held by nearly every American. When challenged in recent years, by those who seek to open up our natural parks for resource extraction, we fought back. We continue to fight the interests of the many over the interests of the few, the powerful and the well connected. You can and must be our champion for Medicare, Social Security, and for all Americans who hold them dear. I agree with you that we must win the future, but a future where Social Security and Medicare do not provide retirees with dignity, is not the future I am fighting to win.

This is a defining moment and please make what you know is best the path forward!

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Denise Andrews", written over a horizontal line.

DENISE ANDREWS

State Representative

Second Franklin District