



## NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN

### Here They Go Again -- AARP Undermining Seniors' Benefits *Statement of NOW President Terry O'Neill*

June 17, 2011

It's deja vu all over again. In 2003, AARP, the giant lobbying organization for seniors, backed a change in Medicare that headed this health insurance program down a path toward privatization and increased costs for retirees. Why did they do this? To get fatter revenues for the insurance plans offered by AARP, a purportedly "non-profit" organization.

At the time, the National Organization for Women blasted AARP for supporting the Medicare change, pointing out that most women would lose if the government privatized coverage under for-profit, managed-care plans and that the new policy would mostly benefit higher-income seniors. We now know that, indeed, costs for health care under the private, for-profit plans have increased yearly -- sometimes in the double-digits.

Now, according to a story in the Wall Street Journal, the organization is ready to accept cuts to Social Security benefits -- just as budget negotiations reach a critical tipping point. John Rother, the organization's policy chief, is quoted as saying: "The ship was sailing, I wanted to be at the wheel when that happens." In other words, AARP cares more about positioning itself as an insider than supporting seniors. Since this story ran, AARP's CEO has issued a non-denial denial; NOW was not impressed.

Which is it -- does AARP not understand, or does it simply not care that Social Security benefit cuts would push hundreds of thousands of seniors into poverty and that women would be hit especially hard, having less resources to fall back on after a lifetime of wage discrimination? Has AARP not heard, or does it simply not care that a substantial proportion of the baby boom generation is unprepared for retirement, having seen wages stagnate or fall over their working lives, their home values plummet, and their retirement savings decimated thanks to deceptive and irresponsible Wall Street dealings?

AARP's machinations to keep itself in with the in-crowd are particularly reprehensible because Social Security has nothing to do with the federal budget and would be made solvent for 75 years and beyond simply by scrapping the cap on wages subject to the payroll tax. Do AARP's leaders not understand this, or do they simply not care?

So we have to ask: 'What is AARP thinking?' Obviously, they are NOT thinking about the well-being of a majority of their membership if they back ANY benefit cuts to Social Security. AARP members need to re-assess their membership in an organization that is not adequately representing their best interests.

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#### **For Immediate Release**

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