

- Americans **count on it.**
- Congress **might cut it.**
- What a **survey** shows.

## Social Security

# Where Do We Go From Here?

By Thomas N. Bethell

Social Security faces an uncertain future. As the bipartisan fiscal commission appointed by President Obama considers ways to address the federal budget deficit, the 75-year-old system finds itself caught between two sharply conflicting points of view.

### ■ Strengthen the system

Increase revenue to bolster its long-term financial stability. As pensions and personal savings decline, people over 50 are counting more on Social Security than they expected when they were younger, according to a new *AARP Bulletin* survey.

### ■ Shrink the system

Reduce benefits. Many lawmakers, citing a need to control the ever-widening federal deficit, have floated proposals for lower-than-expected benefits for millions of workers retiring 20, 15, even 10 years from now.

**Let's take a closer look** at the two basic views. Paul Ryan, meet Myra Trent.

Rep. Paul Ryan of Wisconsin, the ranking Republican on the House Budget Committee, is a member of the deficit commission, which expects to deliver its recommendations by year's end.

Ryan has drafted legislation that he calls a "Roadmap for America's Future." It would address the deficit largely by reducing future payments

for Social Security (along with Medicare and Medicaid). **Workers who are 55 or younger in 2011** would see their future benefits reduced.

To compensate, they could divert part of their payroll taxes to a series of government-managed funds—but with no guarantee that their savings would replace their lost benefits.

### Myra Trent, 50, Spokane, Wash.

"Franklin Delano Roosevelt got this country back on its feet, and he brought out Social Security to help people—period. That's what it does—and it has changed us for the better."

