

Social Security Reforms Rejected in Poll

Women of color want program strengthened

The majority of African American and Hispanic women believe that privatizing Social Security will jeopardize their future retirement security, and would prefer to see the Social Security program strengthened than radically changed.

Those are among the findings of a recent poll conducted by AARP and the National Partnership for Women and Families

that was released at the National Forum on Women & Social Security on Capitol Hill last week.

"Women of color reach retirement at a severe disadvantage. On average, they earn less and are less likely to have private pensions," said National Partnership policy counsel Deborah Cuevas Hill. "As a result, African American and Hispanic women depend on Social Security's progressive benefit formula and guaranteed, lifelong retirement benefits even more than others do."

The poll found strong resistance among women of color to



Deborah Cuevas Hill

any reforms that would weaken Social Security and undermine their retirement security, said

National Partnership President Debra L. Ness.

"African American and Hispanic women want lawmakers to secure the benefits they are paying for - not privatize the system," she said.

The poll found that, among African American and Hispanic women, nine in 10 want Social Security to be protected as a guaranteed benefit, not privatized. Eighty-eight percent want Social Security to be strengthened, not replaced with something else, and three in four support keeping the program as close to the present

system as possible.

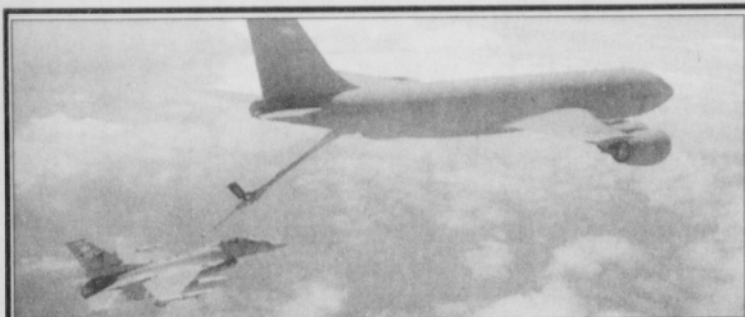
More than half of those polled feel that allowing workers to invest payroll taxes in the stock market will weaken the system. Half initially supported allowing workers to invest some of their Social Security payroll taxes into individual retirement accounts. But, when they were told that private accounts would mean a reduction of Social Security's guaranteed monthly benefit for everyone, support for privatization dropped to just 19 percent.

An overwhelming majority of

more than 90 percent say our nation has a responsibility to current retirees, as well as future generations, to ensure that Social Security is there for them.

Only 1 in 5 women of color support private accounts if it means massive borrowing in order to pay the Social Security benefits of current retirees.

Nearly three-quarters oppose private accounts if the ups and downs of the stock market meant they might receive less money throughout their retirement than if they had kept all their money in Social Security.



Portland's Air National Guard Base could lose its military unit that maintains Stratotankers, the planes that refuel fighter jets in flight (above) along with its F-15 fighter jets that defend the Northwest airspace.

Base Targeted for Cuts

All Portland-based F-15 fighter jets would be transferred to other states and the Air National Guard base in Portland would be significantly reduced in size under a major base closure and realignment plan announced by the Pentagon Friday.

The plan drew immediate fire from the state's two senators, Democrat Ron Wyden and Republican Gordon Smith.

"I'm going to have lots of questions to understand how the Pentagon plans to keep Oregonians safe if these changes are put in place," said Wyden. "I'm not go-

ing to allow our state to become a sacrifice zone in an era of increased homeland security needs."

The plans call for the Portland-based 939th Air Refueling Wing to move entirely to Oklahoma, California, and Kansas. The majority of the 142nd Air Wing, including all the F-15 fighter jets that defend the Northwest, would move to bases in New Jersey and Louisiana.

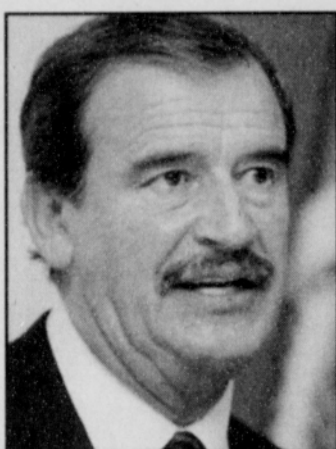
The Portland base would keep the 142nd's expeditionary combat support elements and the 244th and 272nd Combat Communications Squadrons.

Remarks on Blacks Regretted

(AP)—Mexico President Vicente Fox's office on Tuesday insisted his comments that Mexicans work jobs blacks don't want in the United States were misinterpreted, a day after he told leaders in the U.S. black community that he regretted "any hurt feelings."

In a speech Friday, Fox praised the dedication of Mexicans working in the United States, saying they're willing to take jobs that "even blacks" won't do.

On Monday, he spoke with the Revs. Jesse Jackson and Al



Mexico President Vicente Fox

Sharpton by telephone and told them: "I regret any hurt feelings caused by my statements."

The president maintains his comments were misinterpreted and a public apology is not forthcoming, presidential spokesman Ruben Aguilar said Tuesday.

From the point of view of the president, the misinterpretation has been clarified with the affirmation by the president, with his repeated demonstrations of absolute respect for minorities, whatever their race, their ethnicity, their religion," Aguilar said.

Fault Found in Ride Death

(AP) — An amusement park manager in Tennessee was convicted of reckless homicide Monday in the death of a woman who fell from a ride last year, but he avoided a murder conviction.

Charles Stan Martin was originally charged with second-degree murder in the death of June Carol Alexander, 51, who died in March 2004 after her safety harness became too loose on the ride, sending her tumbling 60 feet to the ground.

Before beginning deliberations, the judge asked the jury to consider three charges - second-degree murder, reckless homicide or criminally negligent homicide. The jury took only two hours to reach its verdict.

Martin faces up to four years in prison when he's sentenced in July.

NAACP Leader Admits Mistake

(AP) Civil Rights leader Kweisi Mfume, running for the U.S. Senate in Maryland said having a romantic relationship with a subordinate while heading the NAACP was a "boneheaded thing to do."

Mfume, who is divorced, has previously admitted dating the woman in 1997 and adopting her son, now 15. But he denied that any

of his personnel decisions were affected by the relationship.

"I'm a human being," Mfume said Monday of the relationship. "It was very short-lived and terminated because I recognized it was a boneheaded thing to do. It was my mistake and my mistake solely. That's what makes us better as human beings. Not to repeat mis-

takes ... and to try to own up to them."

An internal memo from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People outlined alleged claims that a woman who once worked at the civil rights organization had threatened to sue over Mfume's relationship with a subordinate.



"I didn't know who I was anymore..."

"I wanted to stop gambling, but didn't know how..."

"I couldn't have done it without help..."



Newsweek Desecration Article Retracted

(AP) — The State Department, moving to undo damage it says was caused by a Newsweek article alleging U.S. desecration of the Quran, the Muslim holy book, is telling its embassies to spread the word abroad that America respects all religious faiths.

In a two-page cable sent Monday night to all U.S. diplomatic posts, the department told the ambassadors to inform host governments and local media that Newsweek had retracted its report that investigators found evidence interrogators at the U.S. naval prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, desecrated the Quran.

The Pentagon has found

nothing to substantiate the allegations, the cable noted, adding, "The U.S. government will continue to investigate all credible allegations of misconduct and will take action against those responsible if the allegations are substantiated."

Newsweek on Monday retracted the report in its May 9 issue after officials in the White House, the Pentagon and the State Department criticized its publication and its use of an anonymous source. Protests in Afghanistan, where more than a dozen people died and scores were injured in rioting, and demonstrations elsewhere in the Muslim world were blamed on the article.

Correction:

A name was incorrect in a story in last week's issue about the Farmer's Market coming to North Interstate Avenue next to Overlook Park. Bill Beamer is the media director for the African American Health Coalition, one of the local groups that are sponsoring the market each Wednesday through Sept. 28 in partnership with Kaiser Permanente. We regret the error.

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