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AARP's Letter to Congress on HR 5, the House Rules Package

"A last minute amendment to HR 5, the House Rules Package for the 114th Congress... would effectively limit potential options regarding Social Security"

January 6, 2015

Dear Representative:

On behalf of our nearly 38 million members and all individuals age 50 and older, we are writing to express our strong concern with a last minute amendment to HR 5, the House Rules Package for the 114th Congress that would effectively limit potential options regarding Social Security, including options to protect benefits under the Social Security Disability Insurance Program. Under the amendment, the House could only consider legislation affecting any part of the Social Security program if the overall effect of the changes improved Social Security's Old Age and Survivors (OASI) trust fund. While we strongly support Social Security and believe Congress should act sooner rather than later to ensure Social Security's finances for the coming decades, the amendment made public today is unduly narrow and limits the House's ability to consider the full range of options for addressing issues facing Social Security.

There has been almost no recent legislative consideration of issues facing Social Security broadly or options to address such issues. One notable exception is Social Security Disability Insurance. The Social Security Trustees have notified Congress that the payroll taxes allocated to the Disability Insurance (DI) trust fund will be inadequate to pay full disability benefits starting as early as 2016 and proposed legislative options to modestly modify the payroll tax allocation to adequately maintain both OASI and DI solvency. Both the House and Senate have held hearings on this issue and have been expected to address the shortfall this Congress.

The amendment to HR 5, by proposing a new point of order, would limit the House's ability to consider all options to address a shortfall in the DI trust fund, including a potential reallocation of payroll tax dollars. This type of shortfall has occurred numerous times in the past -- in both the OASI and DI trust funds -- and Congress has timely acted to protect promised benefits, including the option of reallocation of trust fund dollars. AARP supports reallocation of payroll taxes to ensure the overall solvency of the combined OASDI trust fund and to protect disability benefits from potential cuts. Because the amendment to HR 5 undermines Congress's ability to fully consider all potential legislative solutions -- particularly options successfully considered many times in the past -- we urge the House to reconsider the proposed Social Security amendment. If you have questions, please feel free to contact Joyce Rogers, Senior Vice President, AARP Government Affairs at (202) 434-3750.

Sincerely,
Jo Ann C. Jenkins
Chief Executive Officer
