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Wyden Statement at Finance Committee Hearing to Consider Nomination of Frank Bisignano to Lead Social Security *As Prepared for Delivery*

This morning the Finance Committee gathers to discuss the future of the Social Security Administration and its potential new leader, Frank Bisignano.

Today's news brings fresh reports that it's bedlam out there in Social Security. That's what I heard last week from senior Social Security staffers at a town hall meeting I arranged for federal employees in Portland. Senior Social Security staff told me they were short-staffed even before DOGE arrived, how they can't respond on the phone, the website is crashing, and seniors are getting lost in the system. It is clear that this is happening around America. Every day there's more hard evidence, so it is time to bring a halt to the DOGE destruction of Social Security before it goes any further. With these developments, the DOGE crowd is breaking a sacred promise to deliver Americans their earned Social Security benefits, and it is time for every member of this committee to step up and commit to rolling back these disastrous actions and bringing sanity back to Social Security.

Today's hearing will be an opportunity for Mr. Bisignano to tell the American people whose side he is on. Is he on the side of American workers, who have paid into Social Security and now are being whipsawed by the DOGE bureaucracy?

Or is he on the side of Elon Musk and Howard Lutnick, Trump's cronies who think Social Security is a pyramid scheme, and that seniors looking for help when their checks don't come on time must be fraudsters?

The urgency for today's hearing couldn't be greater. Since Donald Trump took office, Social Security has experienced the most chaos in history. Mass personnel layoffs. Eliminating phone service for basic help, sending seniors to overcrowded and understaffed field offices that have also been put on the chopping block for closure. Political appointees poking around your most sensitive private information, creating a big risk for the mother of all identity thefts. Claims of massive fraud by Trump and the co-president, Elon Musk. This approach is a prescription for denying earned benefits to seniors and Americans with disabilities. I want to be really clear about this: if Americans lose access to their Social Security because of Trump-spawned chaos, that's DOGE stealing their money.

Both Donald Trump and Elon Musk have repeated claims that there are millions of Social Security numbers assigned to people over 150 years of age that are still drawing benefits. Musk says there is a “massive amount of fraud” and that Social Security is the “biggest Ponzi scheme of all time.” Trump says that “money is being paid to many” Americans over age 100. Trump thinks more than one thousand people over 220 years of age are being paid by Social Security. Many Americans are probably curious if those individuals are still receiving their Revolutionary War pensions as well.

These are all lies - here are some facts. Last year the Social Security Inspector General issued a report showing Social Security retirement and disability benefits had a criminal fraud rate of 0.009 percent. As a percentage, that’s much less than the \$1.4 billion in assets that reportedly went missing on Tesla’s balance sheet last week. Social Security itself reported 89,000 Americans aged 99 and over receiving benefits in December of last year. And Social Security automatically stops paying benefits at age 115 even if a death has not been reported.

Don’t take it from me. I’d like to enter into the record an article from the Washington Post, published yesterday, titled “Why DOGE is struggling to find fraud in Social Security.”

What is behind the Trump Administration lies on Social Security? In my view, they are deliberately misleading the public to set the stage for cuts to Social Security benefits that will be draped in anti-fraud rhetoric, the same way Republicans are setting up cuts to Medicaid. Senate Democrats are going to fight attempts to cut Americans’ earned benefits at every turn.

Mr. Bisignano has made a career out of taking over troubled businesses and using an ominous recipe: gut the company by firing hundreds or thousands of workers, sell off pieces of the business, and merge with another company. That resume and approach ought to concern Americans if they apply the pattern to Social Security. As I have been saying for weeks, this approach is a prelude to privatizing Social Security and handing it over to private equity.

Every member of this committee knows that there are ways to strengthen Social Security. But what it does do well year after year is get checks out the door to seniors that rely on them, on time, every single month.

Improving Social Security doesn’t start with shuttering the offices that handle modernization, anti-fraud activities, and civil rights violations. It doesn’t start with indiscriminately firing or buying out thousands of workers. And it doesn’t start with restricting customer service over the phone and drawing up plans to close field and regional offices.

The Musk-Lutnick-Trump plan for Social Security is to take away earned benefits from seniors, hollow out the agency in preparation to hand it over to private equity, and give the savings to their billionaire friends. The fact of the matter is, Social Security could be fully funded for generations to come by cracking down on billionaire tax cheats and eliminating the payroll tax cap on millionaires and billionaires. This year alone the Finance Committee has considered multiple Trump nominees that have one way or another managed to avoid paying what they owe into the programs they're being nominated to run. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent paid little to no Medicare tax, and Dr. Oz managed to avoid paying into both Medicare and Social Security.

So this morning, Americans need to hear Mr. Bisignano's vision for improving Social Security, not dismantling it. They deserve to hear his vision for making customer service easier, not creating more roadblocks. And they deserve to hear a clear rejection of Elon Musk's view that Social Security is some Ponzi scheme perpetrating fraud on the American people.

A web version of this statement is [here](#).

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