

is amended by inserting after the chapter heading for chapter 1 the following:

“VOTER ELIGIBILITY CONFIRMATION SYSTEM

“SEC. 401. (a) IN GENERAL.—The Attorney General, in consultation with the Commissioner of Social Security, shall establish a confirmation system through which they—

“(1) respond to inquiries made to verify the citizenship of an individual who has submitted a voter registration application, by Federal, State, and local officials (including voting registrars) with responsibility for determining an individual’s qualification to vote in a Federal, State, or local election; and

“(2) maintain a record of the inquiries that were made and of verifications provided (or not provided).

“(b) INITIAL RESPONSE.—The confirmation system shall provide for a confirmation or a tentative nonconfirmation of an individual’s citizenship by the Commissioner of Social Security as soon as practicable after an initial inquiry to the Commissioner.

“(c) SECONDARY VERIFICATION PROCESS IN CASE OF TENTATIVE NONCONFIRMATION.—In cases of tentative nonconfirmation, the Attorney General shall specify, in consultation with the Commissioner of Social Security and the Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, an available secondary verification process to confirm the validity of information provided and to provide a final confirmation or nonconfirmation as soon as practicable after the date of the tentative nonconfirmation.

“(d) DESIGN AND OPERATION OF SYSTEM.—The confirmation system shall be designed and operated—

“(1) to be used on a voluntary basis, as a supplementary information source, by Federal, State, and local election officials for the purpose of assessing the eligibility of voter registration applicants, and administering voter registration, through citizenship verification;

“(2) to respond to an inquiry concerning citizenship only in a case where determining whether an individual is a citizen is—

“(A) necessary for determining whether the individual is eligible to vote in an election for Federal, State, or local office; and

“(B) part of a program or activity to protect the integrity of the electoral process that is uniform, nondiscriminatory, and in compliance with the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 1973 et seq.);

“(3) to maximize its reliability and ease of use, consistent with insulating and protecting the privacy and security of the underlying information;

“(4) to permit inquiries to be made to the system through a toll-free telephone line or other toll-free electronic media;

“(5) to respond to all inquiries made by authorized persons and to register all times when they system is not responding to inquiries because of a malfunction;

“(6) with appropriate administrative, technical, and physical safeguards to prevent unauthorized disclosure of personal information; and

“(7) to have reasonable safeguards against the system’s resulting in unlawful discriminatory practices based on national origin or citizenship status, including the selective or unauthorized use of the system.

“(e) RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMMISSIONER OF SOCIAL SECURITY.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—As part of the confirmation system, the Commissioner of Social Security shall establish a reliable, secure method, which compares the name and social security account number provided in an inquiry against such information maintained by the Commissioner in order to confirm (or not confirm) the validity of the information provided regarding an individual whose iden-

tity and citizenship must be confirmed, the correspondence of the name and number, and whether the individual is a citizen of the United States. The Commissioner shall not disclose or release social security information (other than such confirmation or nonconfirmation).

“(2) PROVISION OF ALIEN IDENTIFICATION NUMBER.—In cases of tentative nonconfirmation of an individual’s citizenship by the Commissioner of Social Security after an initial inquiry to the Commissioner, the Commissioner, as part of the confirmation system, shall provide to the person making the inquiry any information the Commissioner maintains regarding an alien identification or authorization number for the individual established by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. The Attorney General, in consultation with the Commissioner, shall specify the information to be provided under this paragraph.

“(f) RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMMISSIONER OF THE IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE.—As part of the confirmation system, the Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service shall establish a reliable, secure method, which compares the name and alien identification or authorization number described in subsection (e)(2) which are provided in an inquiry against such information maintained by the Commissioner in order to confirm (or not confirm) the validity of the information provided, the correspondence of the name and number, and whether the individual is a citizen of the United States.

“(g) UPDATING INFORMATION.—The commissioners of Social Security and the Immigration and Naturalization Service shall update their information in a manner that promotes the maximum accuracy and shall provide a process for the prompt correction of erroneous information, including instances in which it is brought to their attention in the secondary verification process described in subsection (c).

“(h) LIMITATION ON USE OF THE CONFIRMATION SYSTEM AND ANY RELATED SYSTEMS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, nothing in this section shall be construed to permit or allow any department, bureau, or other agency of the United States Government to utilize any information, data base, or other records assembled under this section for any other purpose other than as provided for under this section.

“(2) NO NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION CARD.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to authorize, directly or indirectly, the issuance or use of national identification cards or the establishment of a national identification card.

“(3) NO NEW DATA BASES.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to authorize, directly or indirectly, the Attorney General and the Commissioner of Social Security to create any joint computer data base that is not in existence on the date of the enactment of the Voter Eligibility Verification Act.

“(i) ACTIONS BY VOTING OFFICIALS UNABLE TO CONFIRM CITIZENSHIP.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—In a case where an official who is authorized to receive information through use of the confirmation system is unable, after completion of the secondary verification process, to confirm the citizenship of an individual, the official—

“(A) shall so notify the individual in writing; and

“(B) shall inform the individual in writing of the individual’s right to use—

“(i) the process provided under subsection (g) for the prompt correction of erroneous information in the confirmation system; or

“(ii) any other process for establishing eligibility to vote provided under State or Federal law.

“(2) REGISTRATION APPLICANTS.—In the case of an individual who is an applicant for voter registration, and who receives a notice from an official under paragraph (1), the official may, subject to, and in a manner consistent with, State law, reject the application, or provisionally accept the application, pending the official’s receipt of adequate confirmation of the citizenship of the individual.

“(3) VOTER REMOVAL PROGRAMS.—In the case of an individual who is registered to vote, and who receives a notice from an official under paragraph (1) in connection with a program to remove the names of ineligible voters from an official list of eligible voters, the official may, subject to, and in a manner consistent with, State law, remove the name of the individual from the list, or grant the individual provisional voting status, pending the official’s receipt of adequate confirmation of the citizenship of the individual.”

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents of the Immigration and Nationality Act is amended by inserting before the item relating to section 402 the following:

“Sec. 401. Voter eligibility confirmation system.”

SEC. 3. PERMITTING STATES TO REQUIRE APPLICANTS REGISTERING TO VOTE TO PROVIDE SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER.

Clauses (i) and (vi) of section 205(c)(2)(C) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 405(c)(2)(C)) are amended by inserting “voter registration,” after “driver’s license,”.

KEEPING SOCIAL SECURITY SOLVENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. NEY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. SMITH] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, today the trustees of Medicare issued their report and also the trustees of Social Security issued their report. I think this is another indication that this country, has got to do something, if we are going to keep Social Security solvent, if we are going to keep Social Security available to not only existing retirees, but future retirees.

In the report, the trustees estimated that the time that the Social Security Trust Fund was going to run out of money, the time that there was going to be less money coming in in taxes than was required for benefit payout would be 2012. And they also calculated a slight increase in their estimate of the tax increases necessary to keep Social Security solvent.

One year ago, they estimated that it would take a tax increase of 2.19 percent of payroll. This year they are estimating that it is going to take a tax increase of 2.23 percent of payroll, slightly a worse condition.

However, there is a couple of assumptions that the Social Security trustees used to come up with this estimate. One is they calculated that CPI would be one-half of 1 percent less than their estimates of a year ago.

The second assumption was that real interest rates would increase and therefore, the interest paid from the general fund to the Social Security Trust Fund on the Government securities in the fund would actually increase.

What we have to face up to, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that when there is less money coming in than is required for payout, somehow Congress and the U.S. Government is going to have to come up with the money to pay back the money borrowed from the trust fund. How do they do it? How would they come up with these billions of dollars.

They have several options. One is to cut spending in other programs. One is to increase taxes on existing workers and say, in effect, look, what we borrowed from you we are going to pay back by increasing your taxes and make you pay this additional sum in.

Let me just give my colleagues a couple examples of how much the general fund is going to have to come up with to continue to pay the benefits that are now promised under Social Security.

In the year 2020, for example, the general fund is going to have to pay to Social Security \$219 billion in order to come up with the money necessary for promised benefits.

Mr. Speaker, Members of Congress, the President, politicians are going to have to take their heads out of the sand. They are going to have to face up to the problem that this Ponzi game of Social Security cannot maintain itself, and we need to take immediate action. The suggestion of the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. NEUMANN] that has the support of a lot of us that say at the very least, let us stop Government from reaching into the Social Security Trust Fund and then using that money for other program payments.

The long-range solution will be, I hope, similar to the bill that I have introduced that is now scored by the Social Security Administration to keep Social Security solvent for the next 75 years. The bottom line is we have to pay attention to it. The longer we put it off, the more drastic the solutions will have to be.

DISCRIMINATION WITHIN USDA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina [Mrs. CLAYTON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, known as the people's department, the USDA was established when President Lincoln signed the law on May 15, 1862. It is ironic that the very department created by the President, who signed the Emancipation Proclamation, today faces widespread and documented charges of unfair and unequal treatment of socially disadvantaged and minority farmers.

The farmers and ranchers of America, including minority and limited resource producers, through their labor, sustain each and every one of us and maintain a lifeblood of our Nation and the world. These people do not discriminate. Their products are for all of us. Therefore, it is important that we do all within our power to ensure that each and every producer is able to farm

without the additional burden of institutional racism rearing its ugly head.

Mr. Speaker, it greatly concerns me that in my home State of North Carolina, there has been a 64-percent decline in minority farmers just over the last 15 years from 6,996 farms in 1978 to 2,498 farms in 1992. There are several reasons why the number of minority and limited resource farmers are declining so rapidly, but the one that has been documented time and time again is the discriminatory environment present in the USDA, the very agency established to accommodate and to assist the special needs of all farmers and all ranchers.

In November of last year, the Farm Service Agency Administrator, Grant Tuntrock, stated in a public speech that, "We recognize there have been instances of discrimination in responding to the requests for our services in the past, and we deplore it," he said. As I have stated before, the time has come, however, not just to deplore these occurrences, but to put a stop to them.

We must resolve that the many pending individual cases where discrimination has been found, the planting season is upon us, and if these farmers are to be given the opportunity to farm this year, financial resolution of the unjust treatment they have received must come and must come very, very soon.

With our understanding of this issue, it is my hope that we will continue with a steady movement toward legislation that the emancipation, in the first instance, was to give people equal opportunity, that we in this House will have the courage to stop this and have legislation that will prevent it from happening in the future.

POSSIBLE CHANGES FOR SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. SANFORD] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SANFORD. Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Michigan [Mr. SMITH] just talked about some of the problems facing Social Security if we do nothing to address what the trustees; again, not what Republicans or Democrats have said, but what the trustees have said if we do nothing.

I would like to talk for just a moment about not just the problems inherent in Social Security, because it has done a lot of great things for my mother, for my grandparents, but we need to address some of the benefits that might come if we looked at changing Social Security.

I think, first, we might want to define what we mean by changing Social Security. I do not believe, and I do not think anybody believes, that changing Social Security ought to mean taking Social Security away from existing retirees or those about to retire. However, what I do believe in terms of changing Social Security is that we

ought to begin at least talking about the possibility of, while leaving seniors whole, looking at and exploring options for young people.

Mr. Speaker, what I have consistently heard from young people in my district is that they do not think they are going to get all of the Social Security that is due them. One of the interesting things to look at is I guess a number of the benefits that might come with change.

One of the benefits would be just saving the system, because what the trustees have said is that if we do nothing, it goes bankrupt in about 30 years. But more important than just saving the system, the whole purpose of Social Security ought to be a noble retirement. If one earns more with their Social Security investment, they can retire with more.

What the Social Security trustees have said today is that on average, people today earn about 1.9 percent on their quote "Social Security investment," and most of the folks I talk to in my home district say that they could earn more than 1.9 percent on their retirement investment.

What this means is, if you take somebody earning \$24,000 a year and if one group earns 1.9 percent on their investment and another group earns 5 percent on their investment, it does not take a rocket scientist to know that second group is going to earn more and end up with more in their retirement, and I think that to be a very big benefit of this possibility of changing Social Security.

Another benefit that I think is worth mentioning is the whole notion of retirement age. A pay-as-you-go system, I think, comes at a tremendous cost in terms of human happiness, because with a pay-as-you-go system, we all have to retire at the same age. Yet I can walk down the grocery store aisle and look at 25 different kinds of detergent, I can look at 30 different kinds of toothpaste, I can look at a long magazine stack of different kinds of magazines, but I cannot choose for me when I want to retire, and I think that that, again, comes at a tremendous cost in terms of human happiness, because we are all different.

In my home State of South Carolina, we have STROM THURMOND, who would like to work until he is 100 or 150, I am not sure, but he wants to work basically until he dies. And I say God bless him; go for it. But I have many other friends who say that work is fine, but fishing is even better. I want to retire when I am 50. With the idea of personal savings accounts, you could choose for yourself when you want to retire rather than a Congressman or a Senator or a bureaucrat in Washington choosing for you when you want to retire.

Another benefit I think worth mentioning, and again, there are many, but one other worth mentioning would be we could do something about the national savings rate. Right now in our country we have a savings rate that