

# Bill Kaplan: Trump will cut Social Security if reelected

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While hobnobbing with corporate and political elites at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Trump dropped a bombshell with CNBC. Asked if he would consider cuts to entitlement programs such as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, Trump responded: “At the right time, we will take a look at that. You know, that’s actually the easiest of all things ... .” A second term will expand what Trump has already proposed in cuts.

“His last budget proposal called for a total of \$1.9 trillion in cost savings from mandatory safety-net programs, like Medicaid and Medicare. It also called for spending \$26 billion less on Social Security programs ..., including a \$10 billion cut to ... Social Security Disability ...” (NYT). Too much for even a GOP-led Senate. That did not deter Trump. The White House is getting ready to roll out a new policy “that would strip disability benefits from hundreds of thousands of Americans” (Forbes). So much for Trump’s 2016 campaign pledge: “there will be no cuts to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.”

Trump’s only legislative accomplishment, the \$1.5 trillion tax cuts, has ballooned the deficit to over \$1 trillion. Despite exuberant promises, the tax cuts did not pay for themselves. However, the rich got richer and corporate tax revenue plunged. “400 of America’s largest corporations paid an average federal tax rate of about 11 percent ... last year ..., roughly half the official rate ... 91 (Fortune 500) corporations ... paid no federal taxes last year” (Washington Post).

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Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell made his intentions clear in 2018, after the tax cuts passed. Bloomberg's lead blared: "McConnell Blames Entitlements, Not GOP, for Rising Deficits". Wisconsin Democratic Senator Tammy Baldwin tweeted: "This is Washington-speak for cutting the Medicare and Social Security benefits you have worked hard to earn and making you pay for the tax breaks for millionaires and billionaires". Wisconsin GOP Senator Ron Johnson, one of the richest senators, had aggressively secured reduction in pass-through taxes (most income from such partnerships goes to the top 1 percent). The NYT estimated that "Johnson earned between \$215,000 and just over \$2 million in pass-through income in 2016 ... ."

However, a shameless Johnson calls Social Security "a legal Ponzi scheme" and has indicated that he would "consider" unspecified Social Security privatization. Count on Johnson's supporting Trump to sharply cut entitlement programs. Both will pretend the opposite. Already Trump is trying to walk back his talk of cutting entitlements. Trump tweeted: "Democrats are going to destroy your Social Security. I have totally left it alone (a lie), as promised, and will save it!" A sick joke given that Trump is bankrupting the country.

Trump and the GOP are racing to see how cruel to be: do nothing to help troubled private pension plans; eliminate the Affordable Care Act and remove 4 million Americans, including thousands of Wisconsinites, from receiving food stamps. Trump and the GOP only hear the wealthy.

Trump, if reelected, will dramatically cut Social Security and more.

*-Kaplan wrote a guest column from Washington, D.C. for the Wisconsin State Journal from 1995 - 2009.*