

# Deborah Cromer: Derrick Van Orden must fight to protect Social Security, find common ground

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For forty years I was proud to work as a teacher. It's hard work, but it's work that's worth doing. The joy of teaching a young student how to read, helping students overcome learning challenges, and preparing them to succeed is something I would do over again in a second.

But I didn't go into teaching for the money, so today as a retiree I really rely on my pension, Social Security, and Medicare to provide me with financial security. They also give me the freedom to spend my retirement giving back by volunteering in the community and helping even more kids learn to read. Without Social Security and retirement, I'll have to go back to work part-time just to make ends meet.

That's why I get so concerned when I see members of Congress proposing changes to programs that retirees like me depend on and why I expect Congressman Derrick Van Orden to stand up for people like me in Congress.

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Unfortunately since he took office earlier this year, Van Orden has supported policies that could really jeopardize retirement security for millions of Americans. One of the first actions he took in Congress was to introduce a bill that could radically slash Social Security and Medicare benefits, balancing the federal budget at the expense of people like me who have paid our fair share and expect these programs to be there for us when we retire.

Congressman Van Orden didn't stop there though. Earlier this year he was part of a group of congressmen who nearly forced us to default on our nation's bills during the debt limit fight. He joined Republicans in supporting a plan that demanded drastic cuts to federal programs, including education and health benefits for our veterans, instead of simply increasing the debt limit and avoiding an economic catastrophe that would have risked Social Security and Medicare payments for people like me.

We're once again faced with the prospect of a government shutdown at the end of the month because Republicans are pushing extreme cuts that would affect families like mine while they're preparing to give tax breaks to corporations and the rich. Their proposed cuts could delay people who have claims or need to enroll and jeopardize our economic recovery that is already providing relief from rising costs.

I don't believe in asking for more than we deserve. But I believe that every human being should have the opportunity and resources they need to thrive. When Congressman Van Orden threatens the wellbeing of his constituents by supporting these policies, it's up to us to speak out and demand better from him.

Whether it's working to avoid a government shutdown or opposing dangerous policies that slash benefits for constituents like me, we need Congressman Van Orden to do the right thing.

*-Deborah Cromer is a retired teacher from La Crosse, Wisconsin. She is an active volunteer and community advocate.*