

# Denise Collins: The first presidential primary debate is the chance for Republicans to commit to protecting Social Security

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Wisconsin is a pivotal state for any candidate vying for the White House, and soon election season will kick off in earnest with the first Republican presidential primary debate in Milwaukee on August 23. Wisconsinites and voters around the country will tune in to hear from the [qualifying candidates](#) as they make their pitch to be the next president. While a number of policy problems will be discussed on stage, one issue that's top of mind for voters – Social Security – should be front and center.

With so many Wisconsin seniors who rely on Social Security watching the August debate, candidates should use the bright lights of the debate stage to commit themselves to protecting the fund and ensure that they will not cut benefits for those who have spent decades contributing to the program.

Social Security is especially important to the people of Wisconsin. Here in the Badger State, many Wisconsinites rely on the fund to make ends meet. Almost [1.3 million](#) Wisconsinites receive monthly Social Security payments, and trust me when I say that voters are committed to supporting a candidate who's going to protect those essential benefits. Data shows that in previous elections, voters aged 45 and above made up [two-thirds](#) of the electorate in the Badger State, and [80%](#) voters over the age of 50 here in Wisconsin report that protecting Social Security is one of their top concerns. Wisconsinites care about Social Security, and we want the best ideas on how to keep the fund stable without any cuts.

The seven candidates who have so far qualified for the first debate need to use it as a chance to commit to millions of Wisconsinites and American voters that they will defend Social Security. Florida Governor Ron DeSantis and Senator Tim Scott, seen by most as top presidential contenders, have sent mixed messages about Social Security in their campaign rhetoric, while other contenders like Nikki Haley and Chris Christie have called for raising the retirement age and cutting Social Security

for younger Americans.

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Any call for cuts to Social Security is unacceptable to Wisconsin voters and the majority of Americans. This debate is a chance for every candidate to take the right stance on Social Security and start talking about ways to keep the program going for future generations.

The 2024 election will be defined by many issues, but Social Security remains top of mind for most voters. Too many folks here in Wisconsin and elsewhere rely on Social Security to help pay for necessities like groceries, gas, and rent. We've spent decades working hard and paying into Social Security, and that's why we want candidates who will ensure that we can take advantage of the fund's benefits.

Whoever the next president is, that person needs to be someone who cares about protecting Social Security as much as the voters who send them to the White House. On August 23, the people of Wisconsin and voters across America will be paying very close attention to what's said on the stage in Milwaukee.

*—Denise Collins is a leader in suburban Milwaukee County, Wisconsin where she has served on the Greenfield Common Council and numerous civic organizations.*