

RETHINKING THE AGING PROCESS

A New Aging for a New Millennium

**SENATOR JOHN BREAUX, RANKING MEMBER
U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging**



Fall 2000



SENATOR JOHN BREAUX: *A Voice of the Baby Boomers*

Sen. Breaux has worked to prepare America for the demographic challenges that await when the baby boomers retire and swell the ranks of the nation's senior population.

In November 1999, Sen. Breaux and the Aging committee held a first-of-its-kind hearing on the challenges faced by the baby boomers. Tipper Gore outlined the characteristics that define her generation. She discussed how baby boomers must balance many competing needs, such as their parents, children and careers.

The future of aging is here today. Leading the way are the baby boomers, those 77 million Americans born between 1946 and 1964. In the next 12 to 30 years, this generation will join the ranks of Americans 65 and older. Is America ready for the challenges posed by this new face of aging?

As ranking Democrat of the Special Committee on Aging, I have devoted much of my effort to meeting the demographic challenges that await when the baby boomers retire. This moment presents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to define America and the rest of the world — all experiencing global aging — in the new 21st Century.

So as we herald this new millennium, let us also accept history's invitation to rethink the aging process. The future of aging is here today.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Breaux".

JOHN BREAUX
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging

The Senior boom is coming, and it will transform our homes, our schools, our politics, our families, our lives and our deaths. And not just for the older people. For everybody.

— *Newsweek*, March 1, 1999

(See charts on page 3)

**WORKING FOR
OLDER
AMERICANS:
*Protecting and
Modernizing
Social Security
and Medicare***

“The Congress is too often caught up in the details of a pressing issue or an emerging crisis, and does not step back and look at the ‘big picture.’ Passing preventative policies today will go a long way toward avoiding a crisis tomorrow.”

A senior member of the Senate Finance Committee, Sen. Breaux is widely recognized as a leader in efforts to preserve and modernize Social Security and Medicare — programs older Americans rely on for their retirement income and health security.

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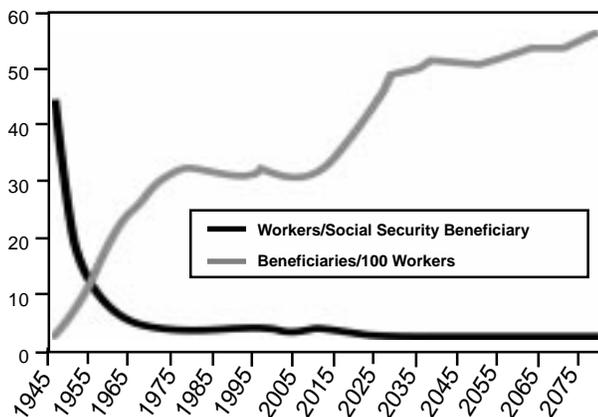
Social Security

“To provide benefits for future generations, Social Security must be modernized to maintain a sound financial footing.”

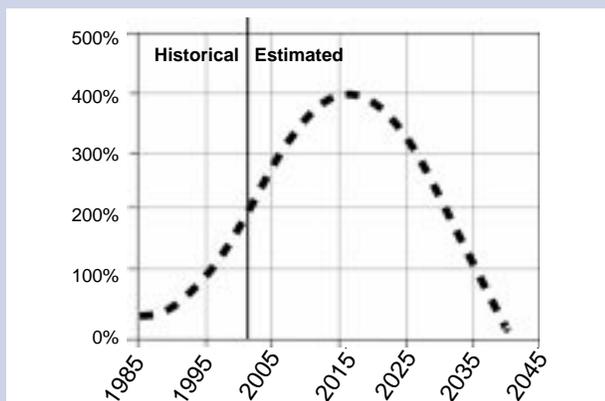
Sen. Breaux is an author of the only bipartisan legislation in Congress to preserve and modernize Social Security. His “21st Century Retirement Program” (S. 1383) extends Social Security’s solvency for another 75 years, strengthening this important safety net and creating new retirement savings.

As ranking Democrat of the Senate subcommittee on Social Security and Family Policy, Sen. Breaux will lead the way in the debate on Social Security reform in upcoming years.

Long-Term Outlook of the Social Security Program



Social Security Trust Fund Balance [Intermediate Projections]



Source: 2000 OASDI Trustees Report

Medicare, Prescription Drugs

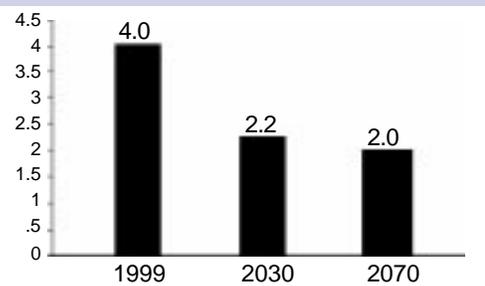
“The lack of prescription drug coverage is one of Medicare’s most serious deficiencies. Prescription drugs, which help keep people out of hospitals, are as important today as a hospital bed was when Medicare was created in 1965.”

Because Medicare only covers 53 percent of seniors’ health care costs, beneficiaries must spend an average of \$2,430 out-of-pocket on health care each year. Medicare does not cover necessities such as prescription drugs, eyeglasses or long-term care.

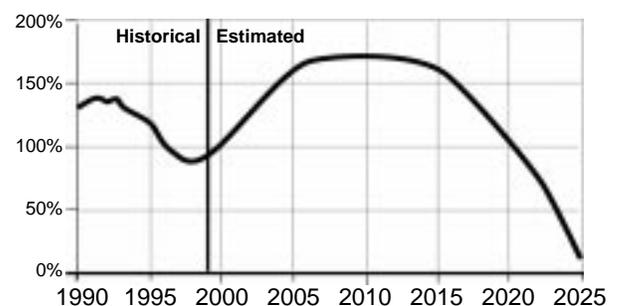
In May 2000, Sen. Breaux joined Sen. Bill Frist (R-Tenn.), the Senate’s only medical doctor, to introduce the first comprehensive, bipartisan Medicare reform bill. Their “Breaux-Frist 2000” Medicare reform plan modernizes Medicare for its nearly 40 million beneficiaries, and adds a prescription drug benefit.

Breaux-Frist 2000 is modeled after the “Medicare Preservation and Improvement Act of 1999,” (S. 1895) which Sen. Breaux introduced late last year. Much of Sen. Breaux’s Medicare reform legislation is based on recommendations formulated by the National Bipartisan Commission on the Future of Medicare, where he served as chairman.

Workers per Medicare Beneficiary [Based on Intermediate Assumptions]



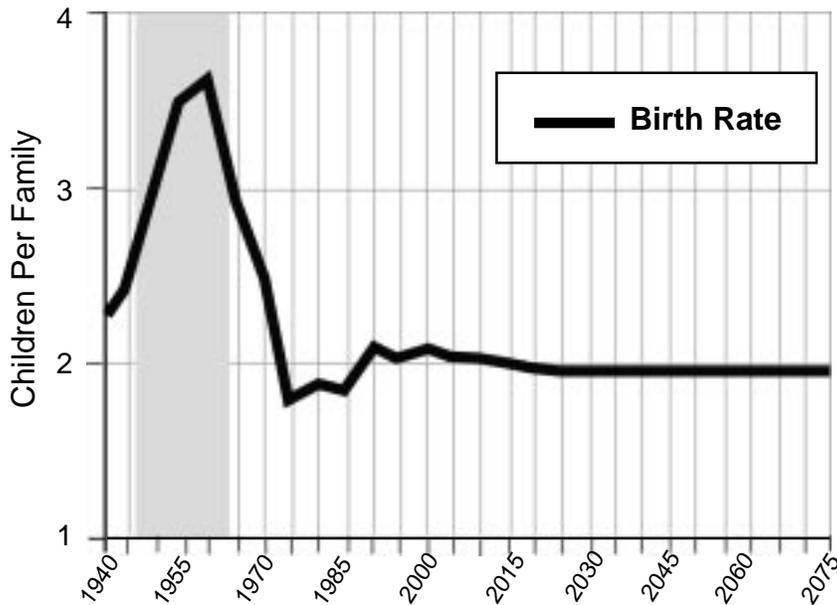
Medicare Trust Fund Balance as a Percentage of Annual Expenditures



Source: HFCA 2000 Trustees Report

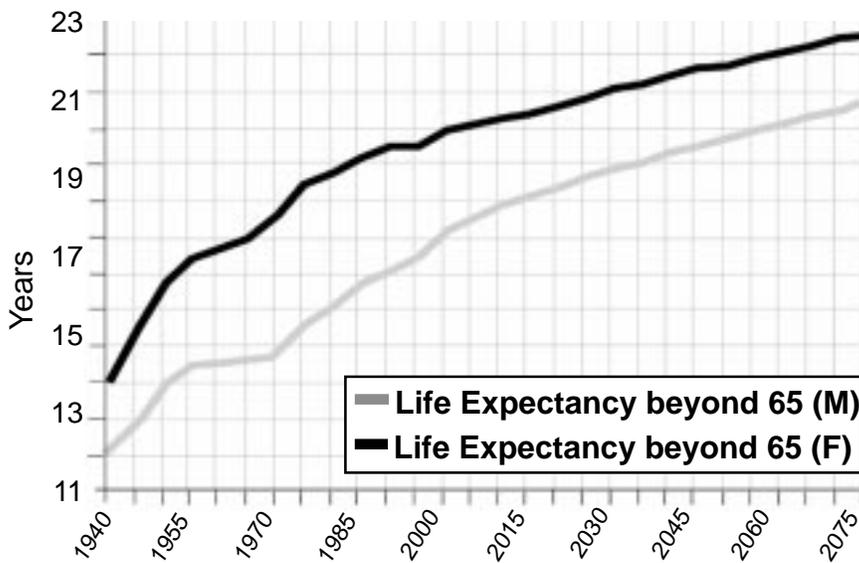
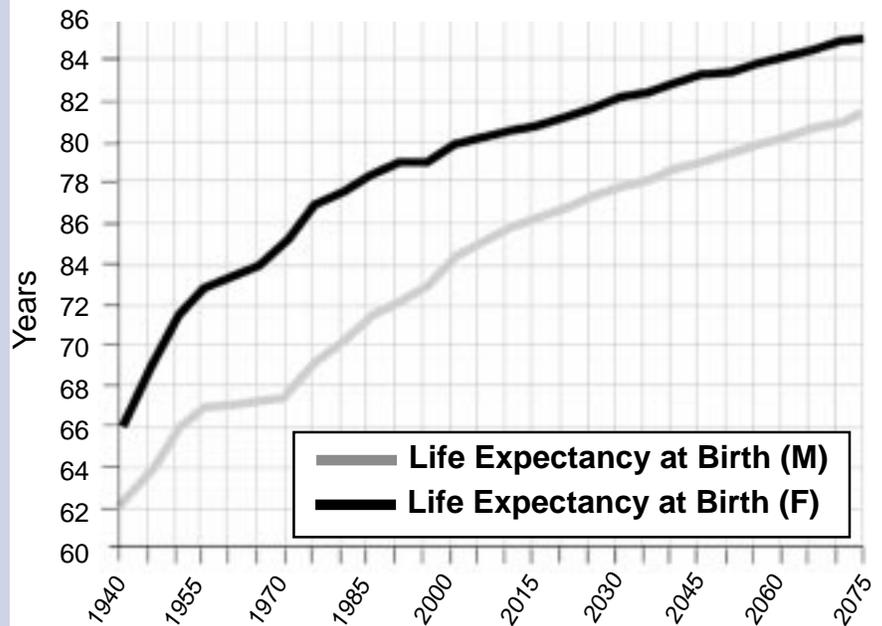
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Lower birthrates that followed a large baby boom generation between 1946 and 1964...

...mean fewer people to pay for the Social Security and Medicare benefits of this soon-to-retire generation...



...who will live longer in retirement than any group in history.

CARING FOR THE CAREGIVERS

“The fight to keep Social Security and Medicare solvent is probably one of the biggest issues facing Congress as we enter the 21st century. But, we must keep in mind that the aging of the baby boomers presents many other complicated problems that require serious attention.”

Sen. Breaux has worked to bring national attention to the plight of family caregivers, those 22 million Americans — of which baby boomers make up 40 percent — who provide care for an elderly relative. Five million Americans are “sandwich generation” caregivers, providing care for both a parent and a child.

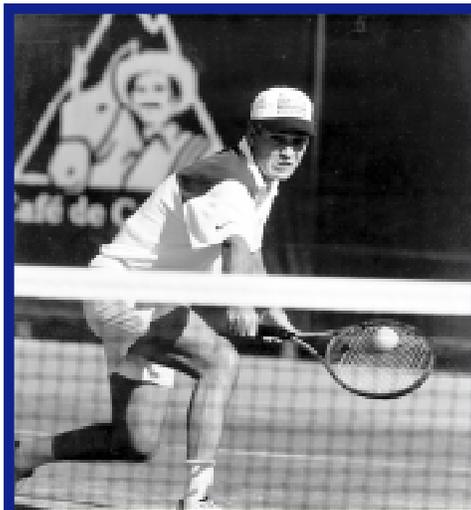
“Caregiving is an important issue for boomers because they are today’s caregivers. Statistics show the average caregiver is a 46-year-old woman who works outside the home while spending 18 hours each week caring for her mother.”

To help ease the caregiving burden, Sen. Breaux introduced legislation to establish the National Caregiver Support Program. The program would enhance support services and information for family caregivers, provide respite care, counseling, education and training.

In October 1999, Sen. Breaux held a field hearing at the University of Louisiana at Monroe to discuss what the status of family caregiving will be once the baby boomers reach their later years.

THE BEST YEARS: Improving Older Americans’ Quality of Life

As baby boomers reap the benefits of longevity, businesses must continue to innovate to meet the needs of a graying America. New industries will emerge to serve older consumers. Society must rethink how it will address this growing group of older Americans.



Sen. Breaux playing tennis against a gold medal winner at the 1999 Senior Games in Orlando.

Long-Term Care

“Not only must we ensure the federal and state governments help improve care, we must give consumers usable, quality information to empower them to make good decisions when choosing a long-term care facility.”

The Aging Committee works hard to improve the quality of care in nursing homes. In an effort to ensure only the best in care, the Committee is more than two years into an extensive investigation into the quality of care received in America’s nursing homes. But, Sen. Breaux also realizes that aging boomers will demand independence as they age. New industries must rise to meet the needs of older Americans who will require safe, affordable housing alternatives.

For that reason, assisted living facilities — a step between independent housing and the institutionalized care of a nursing home — will be attractive alternatives to aging boomers because they offer more freedom. Now is the time to think ahead to what aging boomers will want and need.

Omnibus Long-term Care Act of 2000

Long-term care is important to older Americans, their caregivers and the 77 million baby boomers who will soon retire.

To address the long-term care needs of seniors, family caregivers and millions of baby boomers who start retiring this decade, Sen. Breaux joined a bipartisan coalition of senators to introduce the *Omnibus Long-term Care Act of 2000*.

This legislation authorizes a \$3,000 tax credit to cover caregivers’ long-term care expenses; implements the National Caregiver Support Program introduced by Sen. Breaux in March 1999; and creates a tax deduction for the premiums of qualified long-term care insurance policies. This deduction is accelerated for those 55 and over, and may be offered as a pre-tax benefit to employees. In addition, the bill authorizes the federal Office of Personnel Management to offer long-term care insurance to government employees through private insurers.

Investigating Fraud and Abuse

“Unfortunately, older Americans are persistent targets of fraud because they are often lonely and dependent. Fraud against the elderly has severe implications because it strips them of their assets and life savings, and makes it more difficult for the federal government to help provide for their income security.”

Sen. Breaux has worked to prevent senior fraud and abuse from booming with the baby boomers. In April, the Aging Committee held two hearings to investigate unscrupulous funeral practices. Some providers fail to provide price lists so consumers can comparison shop when purchasing funeral services, and buy only those goods and services they want.

“We cannot legislate decency, but we can ensure consumers are aware of their rights and are on the lookout for potential fraud. In the end, an empowered consumer is stronger than the most potent regulation.”

In May 2000, the committee investigated the fraud perpetrated by some Social Security representative payees who manage the money, and provide food, shelter, clothing, medicine and other necessities for 6.5 million disabled and older Americans. At the hearing, Sen. Breaux announced legislation to combat this type of fraud.

Most recently, Sen. Breaux took aim at the increasing fraud perpetrated by some salespeople who sell estate planning products known as living trusts to low-income seniors who may not need them through high-pressure sales tactics, misrepresentation and other unscrupulous methods.

End-of-Life Care

End-of-life issues are not just important to seniors, but to all Americans who care for an aging parent. Better medical training and more public awareness will allow both caregivers and seniors to face the end of life with confidence, choices and comfort.

An often undiscussed but equally important issue for caregivers is end-of-life care. At a hearing in July, Sen. Breaux explored ways to better educate medical practitioners and the public on end-of-life care in America so no senior spends the last stages of their life in pain, discomfort or severe suffering.

ENSURING A HEALTHY AGING

Sen. Breaux has been a strong proponent for placing healthy aging at the top of the national policy agenda. In September 1999, the Aging Committee held a hearing on senior fitness to explore ways seniors can maintain a healthy quality of life in their later years. Later that year, Sen. Breaux exercised with older Louisianians in



Sen. Breaux showing seniors in Lafayette, La. how easy it is to stay fit in their later years.

Medical technology is adding years to the lives of millions of baby boomers. But now the goal must shift toward adding life to those years.

Lafayette and Lake Charles to show how to stay fit and healthy as they get older.

Sen. Breaux also serves as spokesperson for the National Senior Games Association, coordinator of the Senior Olympics. At the Games,

which were held at the Disney Wide World of Sports Complex in Orlando, Sen. Breaux delivered the keynote address and received the torch for Baton Rouge, La., site of the 2001 Senior Olympics. More than 12,000 senior athletes participated, making these Games the largest multi-sport event in American history.

GLOBAL AGING

Sen. Breaux is also highly respected for his work on global aging issues.

In 1999, the U.S. Committee for the Celebration of the United Nations International Year of Older Persons, a coalition of national leaders in the field of aging, recognized Sen. Breaux for his leadership in addressing the needs of the world's growing elderly population.

And in January 2000, Sen. Breaux was invited to join former vice president Walter Mondale and former Japanese prime minister Ryutaro Hashimoto to address the first of three conferences on global aging. At the conference, global policymakers, business leaders and financial experts assessed the economic, political and strategic implications of aging in the world's industrial nations — some of which, like Japan, are aging much faster than the United States.

A PEEK INTO THE LOOKING GLASS: *Preparing for the "Age Wave"*

"Many of our social policies were built for yesterday's and today's seniors. But, the baby boomers are a unique generation with hefty political clout and high expectations, and they will demand that our nation's public policies meet their needs."

The size and distinct character of the boomer population — who have already left their indelible mark on every aspect of America's social landscape — will not only give a sense of urgency to current issues, but also create a whole new set of social issues America must address. And, they will continue to revolutionize and redefine the American aging experience as they move toward old age.

This generation has lived through advancements in both medicine and technology, and will expect more from their country as they carry their demands for a good quality of life well into their later years.

For example, the role of technology — which has paved the way for longer life spans — will improve older Americans' everyday living through remote caregiving and easier mobility. The need for safe and adequate housing, and better transportation options, will demand our attention as well.

It is clear, aging affects every American regardless their age, race, gender, ethnicity or income. Now is the time to rethink aging in America.



Sen. Breaux greeting Louisiana participants at the 1999 Senior Games in Orlando.

BACKGROUND OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

The Senate Special Committee on Aging's influential history began in 1961 when it was formed to work on behalf of older Americans

Since then, the Aging Committee has served as a focal point in the Senate for discussion and debate on matters important to older Americans. The committee's primary purpose is to study issues, conduct oversight of programs, investigate reports of fraud and abuse, and make legislative recommendations.

The Aging Committee will remain in the thick of the debate on issues central to the lives of older Americans.

**To view Senator Breaux's video,
Voice of the Baby Boomers, visit
<http://breaux.senate.gov/aging.html>**

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