

# Perspectives

## Easy answers to the Social Security problem



**Dave Barry**  
columnist

I've been thinking about how to fix Social Security. Ordinarily, I don't.

Ordinarily, I focus on issues such as how to remove little pieces of pepperoni stuck in between my teeth, and I leave government problems to the trained professionals in Washington, D.C. (motto: "Over-looking The Obvious Since 1798").

But they are frankly not getting the job done. President Clinton hasn't had time, what with all these pesky scandals, which have forced him to scale down his vision for his second term from "build a bridge to the 21st century" to "settle out of court."

Congress has also been busy, focusing its brainpower on the scandal swirling around House Speaker Newt Gingrich, who was formally accused by members of the House Ethics Committee of reminding

them of the Pillsbury Doughboy.

No, sorry, I'm confusing the House Ethics Committee with me. Newt was accused of violating the tax laws. Now, you may say, in Newt's defense: "But everybody violates the tax laws. The whole point of the U.S. tax system is to be so complicated that no normal human can conform to it, or even think about it for more than 10 seconds without bleeding from the forehead."

This system enables the Internal Revenue Service to select random taxpayers for audit with 100 percent confidence that they will be guilty of something, even if they live in isolated wilderness areas and measure their annual income in squirrel meat.

Yes, but Newt is not a "normal human." Newt is a member of Congress, the very organization, if you

want to call it that, that passes the tax laws, and he is therefore theoretically supposed to have some idea what they say. Of course, the truth is that the congresspersons are too busy raising campaign money to read the laws they pass. The laws are written by staff tax nerds who can

gross rate of annualized fiscal debenture").

My point is that our leaders, what with one thing and another, do not have time for leading, which leaves the Social Security problem up to me.

First, we need to clear up a mis-



put pretty much any wording they want in there. I bet that if you actually read the entire vastness of the U.S. Tax Code, you'd find at least one sex scene ("Yes, yes, yes!" moaned Vanessa at Lance, his taught body moist with moisture, again and again depreciated her adjusted

conception. Many Americans believe that Social Security works this way: The government takes money out of your paycheck, keeps it for you in a safe place such as a giant federal mattress, then, when you retire, starts giving it back to you. If that's how you think it works, then

let me quote the famous French economist Francois Quesnay (1694-1774): "Ding dong, you're wrong."

What actually happens is, the government takes money out of your paycheck and immediately gives it to a retired person (in your particular case, this person is Mrs. Edwina P. Loogersnapper of Yeasting Springs, VT; she says, "hi"). This system works fine as long as there are enough younger workers to support the retired people. But there's going to be big trouble in the year 2012, which is the first retirement year of the massive Baby Boom generation (defined, technically, as "people who, when you say 'Shirley, Shirley, bo-berly,' instantly respond 'Bonana fanna fo-ferley'"). There will be way too many of us Baby Boomers collecting benefits, and way too few "Generation X" workers to support us unless they are forced to pay ridiculously high tax rates, and Social Security will collapse like a Wal-Mart lawn chair under Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass. (Get it? "D-Mass.")

What can we do? One solution would be to reduce Social Security benefits, but this is out of the question because of the powerful senior-citizen lobby.

If any politician even dares to talk

about cutbacks, the American Association of Retired Persons notifies the politician's mother, and she immediately flies to Washington, marches into his or her office and twists his or her ear until he or she promises never to do it again. So, if we can't cut benefits, what can we do? Unfortunately, there is no one easy answer. There are, in fact, four easy answers:

1) Go ahead and force Generation X workers to pay ridiculously high tax rates. They deserve it for starting this super cigar craze.

2) Set a mandatory five-year minimum prison sentence for any person convicted of using social security benefits to make a purchase from the Home Shopping Network. The minimum sentence would be increased to 10 years if the purchase involved a ceramic cat.

3) Do not give Social Security benefits to people who spend the equivalent of the Gross National Product of Chile trying to look as though they are too young to qualify for Social Security. This would be called the "Zsa Zsa" rule.

4) Reduce the expected crush in the year 2012 by allowing Baby Boomers to retire early, going in alphabetical order, starting with the letter "B."

See you on the shuffleboard court.

## Low GPA doesn't mean disaster in job search

(CPS) - On her resume, Stetson University senior Meredith Preuss boasts of her computer skills and biology lab work.

But there's one thing she's left off—her G.P.A.

That's because, Preuss, 22, carries a 2.9 out of 4.0—not a grade-point average that typically catches a potential employer's attention.

"I know grades count but employers are interested in 'well-rounded people,'" Preuss said. "Someone who can't handle the stress of failure is a little scary."

Although many employers view a

high G.P.A. as a way to predict success in the workplace, not every student graduates with a 4.0. For students with a less-than-perfect academic record, learning how to tailor your resume can mean the difference between a job offer and a rejection letter.

Rebecca Emery, career services director at Salisbury State University, said students should always focus on the positive on their resume. That means, "if your grade point average is well below the 3.0 level, leave it off," she said. In some cases, the G.P.A. in a student's

academic major may be significantly higher than the overall G.P.A. In such a case students should include their major G.P.A. on the resume, Emery said.

For instance, Preuss plans to include the G.P.A. in her biology major, a respectable 3.4, on her resume when she applies for jobs in the science field. "That's the one that matters," she said.

Emery adds that students can even separate their upper level G.P.A. from the overall G.P.A. to show employers what they have accomplished in their last two years.

Top-end jobs, however, do look closely at your overall grade-point average, warned Michelle Ohayon, director of the Career Resource Center at Nova Southeastern University.

"Your grade-point average matters a great deal if you're hoping to work in a technical field such as engineering or in the sciences," she said. "If you're going into journalism, employers are more interested in your writing samples. If you're going into sales, your personality matters more than your grade-point average."

Real world experience through internships, cooperative education, or volunteer experience can compensate for your grades, notes Ursula Hibbert, career counselor at Champlain College. "Employers look at these as a true indication of ability," she said. "A good employment history—even when it's not career related—can show determination and a willingness to work hard in pursuit of goals."

Students should use their college's alumni network to help them get over the low-grades hurdle, says Will Smith, the career services di-

rector at Wartburg College.

"That way professors who are familiar with your abilities can make recommendations to alumni which may help you get your foot in the door," he said.

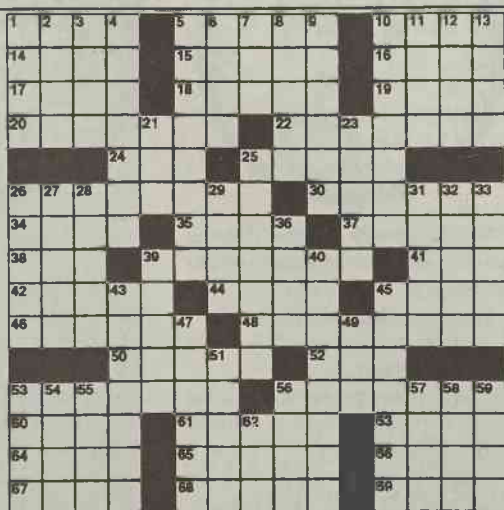
Of course, the best track to take is to have everything: strong academics, activities, and experience, said Frank J. Kollar, director of career development and placement services at Mansfield University.

"The bottom line is that if your grades are lacking, you better have something else of significance to offer an employer," he said.

## Comics and Crossword

### THE Crossword

ACROSS  
1 Beer  
5 Sow  
10 Masticate  
14 Waste allowance  
15 Wireless  
16 Legendary knowledge  
17 Culture medium  
18 Arabian ruler  
19 Abstract being  
20 Free  
22 Slime  
24 Simian  
25 Condensate  
26 One without title  
30 Envisioned  
34 Malt drinks  
35 Seafood item  
37 Mistake  
38 Free from  
39 Storm  
41 Female deer  
42 Escape by deceit  
44 Very dry  
45 Flowerless plant  
46 Take out  
48 Kept  
50 Remorseful  
52 Metal  
53 Followers  
56 Farmer's book  
60 Unrefined metals  
61 Flying machine  
63 Donated  
64 Money maker  
65 Aggressive person  
66 Fibbed  
67 Favorites  
68 Packs away  
69 Otherwise



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### ANSWERS

10 Clothing  
11 Party giver  
12 Gaelic  
13 Unwanted plant  
21 Military address  
23 Plumbed bird  
25 Window covering  
26 Showed interest in  
27 Shade of green  
28 Award  
29 Shade trees  
31 English forest  
32 Mary Tyler —  
33 Movement in fashion  
36 Pure  
39 Grand —, WY  
40 Homesteaders  
43 Stops  
45 Obtain by deceit  
47 Explodes  
49 Goal  
51 Kindled again  
53 Frolic  
54 Great Lake  
55 Camp shelter  
56 Once again  
57 Metal fastener  
58 Sts.  
59 Surrender  
62 In the past



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