

# افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نباشد تن من مباد      بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مباد  
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم      از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

BY DAVID MCCALL

05.12.2023

## How Republicans Gamble with Americans' Futures



Photograph Source: j4p4n – Public Domain

Vikki Marshall helped to connect unemployed Arizonans with food and shelter during the Reagan-era economic crisis and sometimes found herself on the phone late at night trying to talk a desperate person out of suicide.

These experiences as a social worker and union activist in the 1980s left her keenly aware of the tenuous lives many Americans lead and turned her into a lifelong fighter for the opportunities and resources essential to building more resilient families.

But while Marshall spent decades working alongside other union members to foster economic security, Republicans in Congress did the opposite. They repeatedly attempted to gut Social Security and gamble with Americans' futures.

It happened again earlier this month. Extremists in the U.S. House demanded \$183 million in cuts to the Social Security Administration, along with needless cuts to other vital programs and agencies, to avert a government shutdown.

Democrats defeated the right-wingers once again, preserving the programs and keeping the government running. But Marshall, a longtime member of United Steelworkers (USW), knows the GOP will continue targeting Social Security and torpedo the program if they ever have enough votes to get away with it.

“It isn’t their money to play with,” fumed Marshall, 80, now president of Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) Chapter 39-8 in Tucson, Arizona.

“It’s our survival. It’s ours. We earned it,” she said, noting Americans support Social Security while working and, in return, receive payments during retirement or in cases of disability. “I’m very grateful. I have a pension in addition to my Social Security. A lot of my friends and neighbors do not.”

Millions of retirees rely entirely on Social Security and would fall into poverty without it. And even though Americans overwhelmingly oppose cuts to the hugely popular program, Republicans cannot keep their hands off of it.

Over the years, they tried to privatize Social Security and bet Americans’ futures in the stock market. They plotted to increase the retirement age and hollow out benefits for people already paying into the system, potentially forcing Americans to postpone retirement, scrape by during their golden years, or work until death. Republican Senator Mike Lee of Utah, for example, was once caught on camera saying he wanted to “phase out” Social Security and “pull it up by the roots and get rid of it.”

And Republicans used the spending bill debates in recent months to launch yet another assault on working families. This time, they mounted a back-door attack on retirees, demanding \$183 million in cuts to the Social Security Administration (SSA) that would wreck the operation of the program, force the agency to close offices, and make recipients wait longer for benefits.

These kinds of delays exact enormous tolls. A study by the Government Accountability Office found that about 48,000 Americans with disabilities filed for bankruptcy between fiscal 2014 and 2019 while waiting for their Social Security claims to be adjudicated and that nearly 110,000 applicants died between fiscal 2008 and 2019 without ever receiving final decisions on their cases.

The SSA needs more money to serve the public, not less.

“Don’t slice it. Just collect it,” Marshall said, noting “millionaires aren’t paying their fair share” into Social Security right now.

Americans pay Social Security taxes on only the first \$160,200 of their annual income. While working people contribute with every paycheck, millionaires and billionaires—including many uber-rich Republicans in Congress—finished paying into the program in February this year.

“So many of them are well-to-do to start with, and they do not see the need to fund Social Security,” Marshall said of congressional Republicans who want to cut the program and are out of touch with retirees who struggle to pay rent or make mortgage payments.

“Because it isn’t their house, they don’t care. Do they have no conscience?” she added, pointing out that the radicals’ callousness contrasts sharply with the way she and other union members live their own lives.

When she was a USW-represented social worker and activist with the Union Services group in southern Arizona, Marshall took a deep interest in her clients. She still recalls giving bread and other “basics” to the unemployed and celebrating with families who overcame struggles to buy homes, put kids through college, and achieve other milestones. Later, as a member of the Pima County Community College Governing Board, Marshall enrolled herself in classes just to get a better idea of how to help students and faculty members succeed.

And she has spent decades campaigning for pro-worker officials, including President Joe Biden, who has vowed to protect and strengthen Social Security. He also wants to increase funding for the SSA to ensure Americans receive ready access to the benefits they earned.

“He gets it. He understands,” said Marshall, who views Social Security not only as the nation’s inviolable contract with working families but as a way of building shared prosperity and ensuring all Americans have dignified retirements.

“I’m from a small farming community in Iowa on the Mississippi River. We didn’t have a lot. What we had we were prepared to share,” she explained. “We have to take care of each other. We have to do the right thing.”

*This article was produced by the Independent Media Institute.*

David McCall is the international president of the United Steelworkers Union (USW).

CounterPunch 04.12.2023