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We Got Game

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN of the United States Congress, perhaps you're wondering why I've invited you all here today for a rare joint session of both houses. Perhaps you're also wondering why each of you has been issued a special laptop computer with a wireless mouse and what it is you're looking at on this JumboTron up here in front of the chamber.

Glad you asked. It's called the Social Security Game, and it's a popular fixture on the website of the American Academy of Actuaries. You know who they are. They're the folks who keep coming to Capitol Hill to advise us about important issues without trying to bully us and without ever giving us any money.

Anyway, this Social Security Game is pretty cool. You log on to the American Academy of Actuaries website (www.actuary.org) and click on the Social Security Game up in the right-hand corner. (That's it, right up there over the link to that magazine, what's it called? *Contingencies*? Something like that.) And what you get is an interactive exercise that not only lets you select various options for fixing Social Security, but tells you exactly how much of the problem each solution fixes. All without spending a dime of the American taxpayer's money, which I know all of you are loath to do.

What's that, Senator? Why are all the doors locked? Another good question. You see, the problem of whether Social Security will be around to pay us the future retirement benefits we're entitled to has been with us for a long

time now. And though

the program may run short of funds in 75

years or so, one

thing we seem

to have plenty of

is ideas for fixing

it. You'd think, with

all those ideas float-

ing around, fixing it

would be a snap. But

you'd be wrong.

Yes, I know, Con-

gressman, that's naïve.

Forget I said that. An-

other thing we don't

have any shortage of

around here is an abso-

lutely stultifying array of conflicting political interests that seems to make anything we do about Social Security look like political suicide to somebody. That's another great thing about the Social Security Game. Not only does it not spend a dime of taxpayers' money; it hammers no nails in anybody's political coffin. It's fun, it's easy, and it's safe.

All right, settle down. I know fixing Social Security isn't going to be fun or easy, and it sure as hell isn't going to be safe. But doesn't it seem that as soon as anybody comes up with an idea for a fix, everybody seems to fixate on that idea as if it's the only one around? It isn't. Obviously. So what we need is to be able to focus on all the ideas for fixing Social Security—all at once, one at a time, whatever—instead of getting all hung up on only one until everybody gets sick of it and gives up on the whole problem for another 20 years or so. Because by then it'll be too late.

So that's why I've called you all here today. And that's why the doors are locked and why all your cell phones were confiscated and exchanged for those cute little wireless mice. We're all going to play the Social Security Game. We're going to check out each one of these possible solutions and talk about it and see how much difference it makes. Then we're going to accept it, reject it, or agree on some gradation of it and move on to the next possible solution and do the same thing. And we're going to do it until either the problem is fixed or the cows come home. Whichever happens first.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, let's all click down there at the bottom where it says "Start Game" and get to work.

