



**For Immediate Release**  
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**Statement of Dr. Laurie Young, Executive Director**

***Representative Bill Thomas' statement on Women and Social Security***

OWL, the voice of midlife and older women, calls on House Ways and Means Chairman Bill Thomas (R-CA) to rethink his comments regarding Social Security benefits and older women. We agree with Rep. Thomas that women live longer than men.

However, as the majority of beneficiaries and the majority of those who depend most on its progressive, lifetime benefits, women have a unique stake in the future of Social Security. Since we live longer than men and are more likely to be poor in old age, we rely on the steadfast protections Social Security provides, most of all. Most women end up disproportionately dependent on Social Security. It's often the only security older women have. *Without Social Security's monthly benefits, more than half of older women would fall into poverty.* Older women are three times more likely to lose their spouse than men, precisely due to the difference in average lifespan and in fact, more than half of elderly widows now living in poverty were not poor before the death of their husbands. The longer women live, the harder it becomes to financially support their growing needs. As women age, it becomes more difficult to afford rising medical costs, care services, and other necessities, especially when any assets start to run out.

The one thing that won't run out is Social Security. For women, the fact that Social Security is a guaranteed, lifetime benefit with continuous cost of living adjustments is critical. Cutting the guaranteed, inflation protected, lifelong benefit will cause immeasurable harm to women.

"Rep. Thomas' suggestion of cutting benefits for women due to the difference in average age spans is like adding fuel to the fire," said Laurie Young, executive director of OWL. "Women need to focus their attention during the coming months on ensuring this type of reform proposal doesn't threaten their economic security. It is a heartless suggestion on his part."

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*As the only national grassroots membership organization to focus solely on issues unique to women as they age, OWL strives to improve the status and quality of life for midlife and older women. OWL is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that accomplishes its work through research, education, and advocacy activities conducted through a chapter network. Now in its 25<sup>th</sup> year, OWL is an effective voice for the more than 58 million women age 40 and over in America.*