

# Press Release

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## **Baldwin Cautions Seniors on “Notch” Solicitations**

Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin cautions seniors to beware of solicitations that ask them to send money to change legislation to increase their Social Security benefits. The warning comes after a recent spate of calls to Baldwin's office from some Social Security beneficiaries born from 1917 to 1921 (and some years after that), so-called “notch babies,” who believe they are not receiving fair Social Security benefits and are asked to send money to organizations that are working to change the law. Often, these mailings mention Congresswoman Baldwin and suggest that she supports this fundraising effort. This is not the case.

“I want to make it clear that every citizen is welcome to contact me about legislation or federal issues that concern them without cost and without the need for a middleman,” said Congresswoman Baldwin. “I’m aware of solicitations that, while not illegal, are certainly misleading. ‘Notch babies,’ in particular, are vulnerable to fundraising schemes that take advantage of their unique status under complex law,” Baldwin said.

The notch issue resulted from legislative changes to Social Security during the 1970s that first established cost of living adjustments (COLAs) for Social Security benefits, but used a flawed formula that caused benefits to rise substantially faster than inflation. Congress corrected the error in 1977, but beneficiaries born from 1910 to 1916 were calculated using the flawed formula, giving them unintended windfall benefits. The notch babies, born from 1917 to 1921, became eligible for benefits during the period in which the corrected formula was phased in, so their benefits are lower than those who received the windfall benefits. The term “notch” comes from graphs of benefit levels over time; there is a v-shaped dip for those born from 1917 to 1921, during the transition to the corrected formula.

A number of legislative attempts have been made over the years to give notch babies additional benefits, but none has been successful and, although bills are introduced each session to increase benefits for notch babies, no legislative action is expected. A Congressionally mandated commission studied the issue and concluded in its 1994 report that “benefits paid to those in the ‘Notch’ years are equitable, and no remedial legislation is in order.”

(more)

“While there are some legitimate advocacy organizations that use contributions judiciously, I strongly urge my constituents to research any organization that asks them to send money to lobby on this, or any other, issue. I suggest that anyone who is approached by these organizations ask if most of their donations go toward lobbying efforts or toward their own administrative costs, salaries, and other expenses. My constituents can always advise me of their opinions simply by calling my office, writing, or emailing me,” Baldwin said.

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