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# What Should We Do About Social Security?

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Segment Length: 2:46 minutes; 6:09 minutes

## **Videos:**

“The Big Picture: Expand Social Security with Robert Reich”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?&v=chC61TSzdME>

“Free-Market Social Security”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jm0xzdvhNe4>

## **Guide:**

The questions below will help students achieve a better understanding of the arguments made on either side of a contentious topic. Because these questions often touch upon statements made briefly in the videos, we recommend reading the questions before watching each video.

Students are encouraged to take notes during the videos, and it may be helpful for students to break into groups, each taking responsibility for only a few questions, before coming together for discussion.

## **Analysis Questions:**

1. What circumstances have changed since the 1930s that now put Social Security at risk of insolvency?
2. Robert Reich says other circumstances have changed, making Social Security even more necessary. What are these changes? How do they make it more difficult for retirees to maintain their standard of living without Social Security expansion?
3. According to Romina Boccia of the Heritage Foundation, how has rising life expectancy in the U.S. changed the purpose of Social Security payments?
4. John Stossel’s video notes that Social Security savings could earn more money in the stock market than they do under the current government system. What does this mean?
5. Robert Reich wants to “scrap the cap” on income subject to Social Security payroll taxes. How would this ensure the solvency of Social Security?
6. Based on the John Stossel video, why might “scrapping the cap” on income subject to Social Security payroll taxes be insufficient to ensure the solvency of the program?
7. The Heritage Foundation suggests raising the retirement age to 70. Why would this help?
8. The Heritage Foundation also thinks Social Security payments to wealthy retirees should be cut. How do you think Robert Reich would respond to this?

9. John Stossel favors a Social Security reform that would allow Americans to control some of their own Social Security money in private accounts. How did private accounts help the Chilean economy?
10. When talking to people on the street, John Stossel discovered that many Americans don't believe they will receive Social Security payments in their retirement. What's happening to the payroll taxes collected for Social Security?