Obama's Views on Senior Issues

- Protect Social Security
- Strengthen Retirement Savings
- Affordable Health Care
- Protect and Honor Seniors

Plan to Strengthen Retirement Security

The Problem

Insecure Retirement Savings: Retirement savings are near a historic low and 75 million working Americans lack employer-based retirement plans. Too many companies have dumped their pension obligations, leaving workers in the cold.

Income Security: With skyrocketing health care, energy and housing costs, and the risk of being defrauded by insurance companies, too many seniors do not have the resources to live comfortably.

Barack Obama and Joe Biden's Plan

Protect Social Security

Obama and Biden are committed to ensuring Social Security is solvent and viable for the American people, now and in the future. Obama and Biden will be honest with the American people about the long-term solvency of Social Security and the ways we can address the shortfall. Obama and Biden will protect Social Security benefits for current and future beneficiaries alike. And they do not believe it is necessary or fair to hardworking seniors to raise the retirement age. Obama and Biden are strongly opposed to privatizing Social Security. As part of a bipartisan plan that would be phased in over many years, they will ask those making over $250,000 to contribute a bit more to Social Security to keep it sound.

Obama does not support uncapping the full payroll tax of 12.4 percent rate. Instead, he and Joe Biden are considering plans that would ask those making over $250,000 to pay in the range of 2 to 4 percent more in total (combined employer and employee).

Strengthen Retirement Savings

- **Reform Corporate Bankruptcy Laws to Protect Workers and Retirees:** Current bankruptcy laws protect banks before workers. Obama and Biden will protect pensions by putting promises to workers higher on the list of debts that companies cannot shed; ensuring that the bankruptcy courts do not demand more sacrifice from workers than executives; telling companies that they cannot issue executive

bonuses while cutting worker pensions; increasing the amount of unpaid wages and benefits workers can claim in court; and limiting the circumstances under which retiree benefits can be reduced.

- **Require Full Disclosure of Company Pension Investments:** Obama and Biden will ensure that all employees who have company pensions receive detailed annual disclosures about their pension fund's investments. This will provide retirees important resources to make their pension fund more secure.

- **Eliminate Income Taxes for Seniors Making Less Than $50,000:** Obama and Biden will eliminate all income taxation of seniors making less than $50,000 per year. This will provide an immediate tax cut averaging $1,400 to 7 million seniors and relieve millions from the burden of filing tax returns.

- **Create Automatic Workplace Pensions:** The Obama-Biden retirement security plan will automatically enroll workers in a workplace pension plan. Under their plan, employers who do not currently offer a retirement plan, will be required to enroll their employees in a direct-deposit IRA account that is compatible to existing direct-deposit payroll systems. Employees may opt-out if they choose. Experts estimate that this program will increase the savings participation rate for low and middle-income workers from its current 15 percent level to around 80 percent.

- **Expand Retirement Savings Incentives for Working Families:** Obama and Biden will ensure savings incentives are fair to all workers by creating a generous savings match for low and middle-income Americans. Their plan will match 50 percent of the first $1,000 of savings for families that earn less than $75,000. The savings match will be automatically deposited into designated personal accounts. Over 80 percent of these savings incentives will go to new savers.

- **Prevent Age Discrimination:** Obama and Biden will fight job discrimination for aging employees by strengthening the Age Discrimination in Employment Act and empowering the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to prevent all forms of discrimination.

Affordable Health Care

- **Provide Cheaper Prescription Drugs:** Our seniors pay the highest prices in the world for brand-name drugs. To lower drug costs, Obama and Biden will allow the

federal government to negotiate for lower drug prices for the Medicare program, just as it does to lower prices for our veterans. They also support allowing seniors to import safe prescription drugs from overseas, and will prevent pharmaceutical companies from blocking cheap and safe generic drugs from the market.

- **Protect and Strengthen Medicare:** Obama and Biden are committed to the long-term strength of the Medicare program. They will reduce waste in the Medicare system, including eliminating subsidies to the private insurance Medicare Advantage program, and tackle fundamental health care reform to improve the quality and efficiency of our healthcare system. They support closing the "doughnut hole" in the Medicare Part D prescription drug program.

- **Provide Transparency to Medicare Prescription Drug Plans:** Many seniors are enrolled in Medicare prescription drug plans that are actually more expensive for them than other available plans. Obama and Biden will require companies to send Medicare beneficiaries a full list of the drugs and fees they paid the previous year to help seniors determine which plans can better reduce their out-of-pocket costs and improve their health.

- **Strengthen Long-Term Care Options:** As president, Obama will work to give seniors choices about their care, consistent with their needs, and not biased towards institutional care. He will work to reform the financing of long term care to protect seniors and families. He will work to improve the quality of elder care, including by training more nurses and health care workers.

Protect and Honor Seniors

- **Ensure Heating Assistance:** Obama and Biden will increase funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) which helps low-income citizens — many of them seniors — pay their winter heating and summer cooling bills.

- **Support Senior Volunteer Efforts:** Retired Americans have a wide range of skills and knowledge to contribute to local and national public service efforts. Obama and Biden will engage more interested seniors into public service opportunities by expanding and improving programs like Senior Corps to connect seniors with quality volunteer opportunities.

Barack Obama's Record

- **Social Security and Pensions:** In the midst of the 2005 debate over Social Security privatization, Obama gave a major speech at the National Press Club forcefully arguing against privatization. He also repeatedly voted against Republican amendments that aimed to privatize Social Security or cut benefits. Obama has also voted to force companies to properly fund their pension plans so taxpayers don't end up footing the bill.

- **Medicare:** Obama has supported a number efforts to strengthen Medicare, including voting for legislation to allow Medicare to negotiate for cheaper prescription drug prices and to extend the enrollment period for low-income beneficiaries.

- **Protecting Seniors:** After reports that lobbyists, but not the American people, received information about the most unsafe nursing homes in the country, Barack Obama demanded the Department of Health and Human Services release that information to the public. Following Obama's letter, the names of the four Iowa care facilities cited for unsafe care were released to the public. Obama's efforts follow his successful efforts in Illinois to make nursing home information public and strengthen elder abuse laws.