

Obama's Grand Charade: Say No to the Staged Dismantling of Medicare and Social Security

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Here we go again. President Obama is in round three of his ongoing efforts to cut our important social insurances, such as Social Security and Medicare. Whether he succeeds or not is up to us. We can create a stronger economy and healthier population by strengthening and expanding our social insurances and switching to a green energy economy.

Round 1: In April, 2010, shortly after President Obama signed into law a health bill that further privatizes our health care system and while all attention was on this 'historic achievement', Obama created the [National Commission for Fiscal Responsibility and Reform](#). He appointed Alan Simpson and Erskine Bowles as chairs of what was commonly known as the Deficit Commission and loaded the panel with 14 deficit hawks out of the total of 18 appointees. The commission was given the power to create a deficit plan that would go to Congress for an up or down vote.

If there was still any question about the intent of the commission, those should have been answered by the fact that the [Peter G. Peterson Foundation](#) was working closely with them, providing support staff and hosting the America Speaks gatherings in the summer of 2010. Billionaire [Pete Peterson has spent decades](#) arguing for cuts to social insurances.

I attended an [America Speaks](#) event in Detroit in June, 2010 and it felt very similar to the Health Care House Parties that the Obama campaign promoted in December, 2008. The event materials were designed to manufacture consensus on how much to cut our social insurances. But, the [people weren't fooled](#) and when the question of how much to cut Medicare was raised, many people demanded Medicare for all as a choice.

I also testified before the Deficit Commission in late June, 2010, arguing that [Medicare for all would solve both our health and financial crises](#). But the Commission wasn't concerned with effective solutions, instead it was laying the groundwork for the Grand Charade that would lead Americans to believe we have a deficit crisis and accept austerity measures.

The commission was unable to get enough votes among its members by its December deadline for issuing a report, so there was no vote in Congress on their recommendations, but many of their ideas appeared in [Paul Ryan's "Path to Prosperity"](#) in early 2011. Simpson and Bowles also issued their own report which is often mistakenly labeled the report of the commission.

Round 2: In August, 2011, another committee was created and given the same power as the Deficit Committee. This group of 12 members of Congress, 6 from each body and 6 from

each party, was known as the [Super Committee](#). This small committee with extraordinary power was unprecedented and represented a serious usurpation of the democratic process.

The Super Committee held hearings during the fall and was required to issue recommendations by Thanksgiving. From the start, the committee stated that everything was on the table, including social insurances. While they went through the motions of public hearings, the agreements were already being made in secret negotiations and they included cuts to vital programs.

In fact, by this time it was clear that President Obama was not only [willing to accept cuts to Social Security and Medicare](#), two programs that are the pride of the Democratic Party, but was [driving the process](#). [Documents leaked show that Obama offered Boehner a “Grand Bargain”](#) that included cuts to a broad array of social programs that would have hurt every American.

Like the Deficit Committee, the Super Committee failed to reach a consensus by the deadline. No doubt mobilized resistance to cuts to social programs made their task more difficult. The Occupy movement was in full swing, occupiers protested the Super Committee and some even walked to DC from NY, Philadelphia and Baltimore to protest. In Washington, DC, the occupation at Freedom Plaza held our own Super Committee Hearing. Our report, [The 99%’s Deficit Proposal: How to create jobs, reduce the wealth divide and control spending](#), showed that there were real solutions to our crises that were better for the people and were supported by supermajorities of the population.

Round 3: The so-called Fiscal Cliff is the current attempt to convince people that we will have to accept cuts to important programs. If enough people can be convinced that the sky is falling, then President Obama can make the cuts she has sought to make for years. No doubt giving Wall Street what it has wanted for a long time will be rewarded with high-paid speeches to big business when his presidency ends.

And this time, the President has the help of [more than 80 CEO’s, led by Simpson and Bowles](#), to get the job done. The new “Fix the Debt” campaign is starting with a budget of \$60 million for public ads and lobbying Congress. Why is big business getting involved? Cuts to social insurances will allow [further cuts in corporate taxes](#).

This is reminiscent of a similar campaign called “Health Care for America Now” that helped the President pass a Wall Street health care bill. Like Health Care for America Now, the public will be convinced through a strategic propaganda campaign to make demands from Congress that go against their own interests. But, we shouldn’t expect anything less from a president who [won marketing campaign of the year in 2008](#).

So, the president has upped the ante in this ongoing Grand Charade. And unless we take action, cuts to our important programs will cause real suffering and more preventable deaths. There are solutions to all of the crises that we face. We must demand that human needs and protection of the planet be a higher priority than corporate profits.

For example, if we improved Medicare and expanded it to every person in the US, we could effectively control our health care costs which are growing faster than GDP. [Former president Clinton acknowledged](#) that the U. S. could save \$1 trillion each year by adopting a single payer system like almost every other developed nation. We would also improve health outcomes and end bankruptcy due to medical illness and costs.

Just like with health care, if we put in place the right policy for retirement we solve the problem and help the economy. The [Census Bureau reports](#) that in the last decade there has been a 78% increase in Americans over 60 facing the threat of hunger and one in six seniors live in poverty. [Doubling Social Security](#) would bring seniors out of poverty and be a giant stimulus to the economy. It would also be a great relief to every family.

Another popular solution is the [Green New Deal promoted by the Jill Stein campaign](#). The Green New Deal would create high quality jobs and transition the US to a renewable energy economy.

It's time to end this Grand Charade. We mustn't be fooled by this Wall Street agenda. As we've seen in Europe, austerity measures are harmful to people and the economy. For ideas on organizing resistance to these measures, see [Solidarity against Austerity](#) and [Via 22](#).

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