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EXPERT BIOS

Barbara Burt, Executive Director, Frances Perkins Center

On November 8, 2008, Barbara Burt became the first executive director of the Frances Perkins Center. A graduate of Boston University and Harvard University School of Education, Burt brings varied experience to the position. She has been a writer and editor for many publishers and educational institutions, including Houghton Mifflin, McGraw-Hill, Scholastic, National Geographic, and Harvard University.

Long an advocate for responsive government and progressive politics, Burt joined Common Cause in 2003, eventually becoming vice president and director of national election reform programs. In 2007, Burt became the online communications director for Chellie Pingree's successful campaign to represent Maine's First Congressional District in the 111th Congress.

Kirstin Downey, Board Member, Frances Perkins Center and Co-director of the "Social Security Stories Project"

Kirstin Downey, an award-winning journalist at the Washington Post from 1988 to 2008, is a business reporter whose work has focused on illuminating the human implications of important financial trends, particularly boom and bust cycles in the modern economy.

Downey's coverage of the aftermath of the savings and loan debacle of the late 1980s won her several regional press association awards. In 1990, she was named a finalist for the Livingston prize for outstanding young journalist in America for her coverage of the abuse of government housing programs. In the mid-1990s, her articles on sexual harassment in workplaces across America, including in the Mesabi Iron Range in Minnesota and at auto plants in the Midwest, caused a paradigm shift in how people viewed a problem that had been trivialized.

From 2005 to 2007, Downey led the country in reporting on a worrisome but unrecognized phenomenon -- the dangerous growth of risky new kinds of mortgages that threatened to bankrupt borrowers and the financial institutions making the loans. These loans have contributed to a downward economic spiral worldwide. Her reporting went unheeded by the Bush Administration.

Downey left the Washington Post in 2008 to finish *The Woman Behind the New Deal*, a book she had spent nine years researching. Her goal was to look to history to see how a heroine of the past, Frances Perkins, had helped the country deal with financial calamity and how, exactly, Perkins had created the social safety net that will minimize the damage to Americans today.

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Maya Rokeymoore, Ph.D., Board Member, National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare (NCPSSM)

Dr. Rokeymoore is on the board of directors of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare. Rokeymoore is a scholar and activist with expertise in an array of social and political issues. She currently teaches a course on The Politics and Policy of Race and Gender at the American University. Rokeymoore is the former vice president of research and programs at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. Prior to joining the CBCF, she served as the senior resident scholar for health and income security at the National Urban League Institute for Opportunity and Equality.

Nancy Altman, Author, “The Battle for Social Security;” Chair of Board of Directors “Pension Rights Center” and Co-director, Social Security Works

Nancy J. Altman has a thirty-year background in the areas of private pensions and Social Security. She is currently the chairman of the board of directors of the Pension Rights Center, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the protection of beneficiary rights.

From 1983 to 1989, Altman was on the faculty of Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and taught courses on private pensions and Social Security at the Harvard Law School. In 1982, she was Alan Greenspan's assistant in his position as chairman of the bipartisan commission that developed the 1983 Social Security amendments. From 1977 to 1981, she was a legislative assistant to Senator John C. Danforth (R-Mo.), and advised the Senator with respect to Social Security issues. From 1974 to 1977, she was a tax lawyer with Covington & Burling, where she handled a variety of private pension matters.

Altman is a graduate of Radcliffe College and the University of Pennsylvania Law School. She was on the organizing committee and the first board of directors of the National Academy of Social Insurance, a membership organization of over 700 of the nation's leading experts on social insurance. In addition to her work on retirement income, Altman is an assistant producer of the award-winning high school quiz program, "It's Academic."

(THE END)

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SCHEDULE YOUR OWN INTERVIEW WITH BARBARA BURT, OR OTHER EXPERTS ON THE SUBJECT OF SOCIAL SECURITY AND/OR THE LEGACY OF FRANCES PERKINS, MAKE A REQUEST BY SENDING AN EMAIL TO media@socialsecuritystories.org.

FRANCES PERKINS CENTER

Honoring & Learning From the First Woman Appointed to a United States Cabinet

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