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Social Security Reform “Trigger” Buried in GOP Budget Resolution Says The Senior Citizens League

(Washington, DC) – The [House fiscal year 2018 budget resolution](#) includes instructions for creating an unusual Social Security “reform trigger” and sets up an expedited path for ensuing legislation, says [The Senior Citizens League \(TSCL\)](#). “The budget resolution instructions are written in such a way that lawmakers and President Trump would almost certainly be required to take up Social Security reform within the next 12 months,” says TSCL Social Security policy analyst Mary Johnson.

While budget resolutions don’t have the force of law, the agreements set out the U.S. fiscal year budget and serve as a blueprint for subsequent legislation. The House resolution also includes reconciliation instructions for the GOP’s tax reform plan, but the resolution has been stalled due to disagreements over mandatory spending that includes Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid among others.

Under the proposed House budget resolution, a Social Security “reform trigger” would be pulled in any year the Social Security Trustees determine the 75-year actuarial balance of the Social Security Trust Fund is in deficit. The resolution would also put any legislation on an expedited schedule for passage.

“Using that criterion, the Social Security reform trigger has already been pulled,” Johnson notes. In their latest [report](#), the Social Security Trustees say the combined retirement, survivors, and disability Trust Funds will exceed total income by increasing amounts starting in 2022 and will be depleted in 2034, well within the 75-year period called for in the budget resolution.

Once the Social Security reform trigger has been pulled, the House budget resolution stipulates that the Trustees would have until September 30th of the same calendar year to submit recommendations for the changes necessary to achieve a positive 75-year balance to the President. The resolution would then require the President to submit legislation to Congress within 60 days of receiving the Trustees’ recommendations. President Trump promised repeatedly on the campaign trail not to touch Social Security.

“Medicare is also in the cross-hairs for massive changes,” Johnson says. The budget resolution stipulates major changes that would focus Medicare on a system of private insurers, and provide beneficiaries with premium subsidies to shop for their own health insurance. A Congressional Budget Office [report](#) has found that similar proposals in the past would shift a

growing portion of costs to older Americans. In that 2013 report, the CBO estimated that Medicare beneficiaries' premiums would be about 30 percent higher by 2020 than under current law.

“Like health care legislation to repeal and replace Obamacare, Social Security and Medicare reform proposals could become the center of a nasty political tug-of-war,” Johnson says. TSCL works to protect retirement security and to promote better adequacy of both Social Security and Medicare benefits. To learn more, visit www.SeniorsLeague.org.

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With 1.2 million supporters, The Senior Citizens League is one of the nation's largest nonpartisan seniors groups. Its mission is to promote and assist members and supporters, to educate and alert senior citizens about their rights and freedoms as U.S. Citizens, and to protect and defend the benefits senior citizens have earned and paid for. The Senior Citizens League is a proud affiliate of [The Retired Enlisted Association](http://www.TheRetiredEnlistedAssociation.org). Visit www.SeniorsLeague.org for more information.