



**CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE
COST ESTIMATE**

April 23, 1998

**H.R. 3546
National Dialogue on Social Security Act of 1998**

*As ordered reported by the House Committee on Ways and Means
on April 22, 1998.*

SUMMARY

H.R. 3546 would set up an eight-member panel to make recommendations by February 1999 on possible reforms to the Social Security program. The panel would draw on opinions solicited through regional conferences and through the Internet, in an exercise labeled the "National Dialogue."

H.R. 3546 would authorize the appropriation of an estimated \$2 million for these activities. It would also permit the dialogue to finance its activities partly through voluntary donations. Therefore, the bill could affect direct spending and receipts, and pay-as-you-go procedures would apply. CBO estimates that any pay-as-you-go impact would be insignificant.

H.R. 3546 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995 (UMRA).

ESTIMATED COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The estimated budgetary impact of H.R. 3546 is shown in the following table.

The costs of this legislation fall within budget function 650 (Social Security). The small cost (estimated at less than \$500,000) of the National Dialogue would be appropriated from the general fund of the Treasury and would be on-budget; the \$2 million cost of the Bipartisan Panel would be charged to the Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Trust Fund, which is off-budget.

	By Fiscal Year, in Millions of Dollars					
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
AUTHORIZATIONS OF APPROPRIATIONS						
National Dialogue						
Estimated Authorization Level	0	a	0	0	0	0
Estimated Outlays	0	a	0	0	0	0
Bipartisan Panel						
Estimated Authorization Level	0	2	0	0	0	0
Estimated Outlays	0	2	0	0	0	0
DIRECT SPENDING						
National Dialogue						
Estimated Budget Authority	0	a	0	0	0	0
Estimated Outlays	0	a	0	0	0	0
REVENUES						
National Dialogue						
Estimated Revenues	0	a	0	0	0	0

a. Less than \$500,000.

BASIS OF ESTIMATE

CBO's estimate assumes that the bill would be enacted in September 1998.

H.R. 3546 would establish a National Dialogue on Social Security. That dialogue would use the services of two facilitators appointed by the Congress and the President, 36 members of a Dialogue Council to be nominated by private organizations, an Internet Dialogue Coordinator, and an Internet Advisory Board. Citizens' opinions would be solicited in regional conferences and through the Internet. Only the two facilitators and the Internet Dialogue Coordinator would be paid; private contributions to cover other costs would be encouraged. Any such contributions would be considered governmental receipts. The comments and suggestions received would be summarized for use by the Bipartisan Panel by January 1999. H.R. 3546 would authorize the appropriation of such sums as shall be necessary for the dialogue; because the dialogue would use only a few paid staff and would finish its work in a short time, CBO estimates that appropriation would total less than \$500,000.

The Bipartisan Panel to Design Long-Range Social Security Reform would consist of eight members, appointed by the Majority and Minority Leaders in the Congress and by the President. The panel would report its recommendations by February 1, 1999. It would be authorized (subject to future appropriation) to spend up to \$2 million on professional staff and other expenses.

PAY-AS-YOU-GO CONSIDERATIONS

The Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 establishes pay-as-you-go procedures for legislation affecting direct spending or receipts. Because the National Dialogue on Social Security would be encouraged to cover some costs from private donations, the bill could affect direct spending and receipts. CBO judges, however, that those effects would be negligible.

ESTIMATED IMPACT ON STATE, LOCAL, AND TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS

H.R. 3546 contains no intergovernmental mandates as defined in UMRA and would have no impact on the budgets of state, local, or tribal governments.

ESTIMATED IMPACT ON THE PRIVATE SECTOR

H.R. 3546 contains no private-sector mandates as defined in UMRA.

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