



## Social Security Agreement With Mexico Released After 3 1/2 Year Freedom of Information Act Battle

WASHINGTON, Dec. 29 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- After numerous refusals over three and a half years, the Social Security Administration (SSA) has released the first known public copy of the U.S.-Mexico Social Security Totalization Agreement. The government was forced to make the disclosure in response to lawsuits filed under the Freedom of Information Act by TREA Senior Citizens League, a 1.2 million-member nonpartisan seniors advocacy group.

The Totalization Agreement could allow millions of illegal Mexican workers to draw billions of dollars from the U.S. Social Security Trust Fund.

The agreement between the U.S. and Mexico was signed in June 2004, and is awaiting President Bush's signature. Once President Bush approves the agreement, which would be done without Congressional vote, either House of Congress would have 60 days to disapprove the agreement by voting to reject it.

"The Social Security Administration itself warns that Social Security is within decades of bankruptcy -- yet, they seem to have no problem making agreements that hasten its demise," said Ralph McCutchen, Chairman of the TREA Senior Citizens League.

The U.S. currently has 21 similar agreements in effect with other nations, which are intended to eliminate dual taxation for persons who work outside their country of origin. All of the agreements are with developed nations with economies similar to that of the U.S.

For example, a worker who turns 62 after 1990 generally needs 40 calendar quarters of coverage to receive retirement benefits. Under totalization agreements, workers are allowed to combine earnings from both countries in order to qualify for benefits. The Agreement with Mexico, like other totalization agreements, would allow workers to qualify with just six quarters, or 18 months, of U.S. coverage.

But Mexico's retirement system is radically different than that of other participating countries. For example, only 40 percent of non-government workers participate in Mexico's system, whereas 96 percent of America's non-government workers do. In addition, the U.S. system is progressive, meaning lower wage earners get back much more than they put in; in Mexico, workers get back only what they put in, plus accrued interest.

"I applaud the persistent efforts of TREA Senior Citizens League to try to get documents from the U.S. Government about the U.S.-Mexico Social Security Totalization Agreement," said Rep. Walter Jones (R-N.C.). "The American people are finally beginning to get some of the information regarding this Agreement that they have been seeking for so long."

According to the SSA, the Social Security Trust Fund will begin paying out more than it is taking in by 2017, and will be exhausted by the year 2040.

With 1.2 million members, TREA Senior Citizens League is one of the nation's largest nonpartisan seniors groups. Visit <http://www.SeniorsLeague.org> for more information or to see the Totalization Agreement documents.

SOURCE TREA Senior Citizens League

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