

Mr. Speaker, like so many of my colleagues, I think we should prevent 160 million taxpayers from getting a lump of coal and a tax hike this year, but we should not undermine Social Security.

Last year, it was a mistake to take the 2 percent tax cut from Social Security and say we'll cover the losses from general funds. We should not allow a 1-year mistake to become a permanent attack on Social Security and on the livelihood of its beneficiaries.

Social Security should not be used as a rainy day fund or a political bargaining chip. It should not be like another government agency that some years has a good budget and some years has the budget voted away.

President Roosevelt described it best. He said, ``We put these payroll contributions there so as to give the contributors a legal, moral, and political right to collect their pensions. With those taxes in there, no damn politician can ever scrap my Social Security program."''

Now, here's a way to handle the problem and to keep the mechanism of Social Security intact: Make the changes within the existing system. Let's cut the payroll tax for 160 million Americans but make up the lost revenue by temporarily eliminating the cap on wages taxed.

As much as we need economic stimulus now, we need Social Security for generations to come.