

## Legislation Text

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A MOTION supporting the expansion of the Social Security and Medicare programs and benefits and the elimination of the cap on earnings that are subject to the Social Security payroll tax, and directing the council clerk to distribute this motion to Washington's congressional delegation.

WHEREAS, the gap between the pensions and retirement savings that American households actually have and what they need in order to maintain their standard of living was \$7.7 trillion as of 2013, and

WHEREAS, forty-seven percent of working-age families had nothing saved in retirement accounts, and the median working-age family had only \$5,000 saved, as of 2013, and

WHEREAS, one in three American families had no savings at all, and 56.3 percent of Americans had less than \$1,000 in their checking and savings accounts, as of 2015, and

WHEREAS, as of 2011, only about half of United States workers participated in a workplace retirement plan, and only ten percent of all private sector establishments provided defined benefit plans, covering just eighteen percent of private industry employees, and

WHEREAS, as of June 2015, Social Security retiree benefits averaged only about \$1,300 per month, and among elderly Social Security beneficiaries, fifty-three percent of married couples and seventy-four percent of unmarried persons received most of their income from Social Security, and

WHEREAS, as of July 1, 2015, 12.4 percent of the King County population was sixty-five years old and older, and 26.3 percent was between forty-five and sixty-four years old, and

WHEREAS, people of color made up 32.3 percent of King County's population in 2014, and among

seniors sixty-five years old and older in 2012 Social Security was the sole source of income for forty-three percent of Hispanics, thirty-seven percent of African Americans and thirty-two percent of Asian and Pacific Islanders, compared to twenty-two percent of whites, and

WHEREAS, as of April 1, 2015, women constituted 55.7 percent of King County's population over sixty-five years old, and in 2013 the average annual Social Security income received by women sixty-five years old and older was \$12,857, compared with \$16,590 for men, and

WHEREAS, all wage earners who earn above the cap of \$118,500 pay no payroll tax on all of their earnings above the cap, thereby paying an effective tax rate lower than that of wage earners who earn less than the cap, and

WHEREAS, about ten percent of King Country residents did not have health insurance as of 2014, and allowing younger people to buy into the Medicare program would help address this significant problem, and

WHEREAS, while Medicare provides good health care benefits, it fails to cover comprehensive hearing, vision, dental and most long-term care services;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

A. Social Security benefits should be expanded to address the growing crisis of financial insecurity among present and future Social Security recipients.

B. The cap on earnings that are subject to the Social Security payroll tax should be eliminated to pay for the expansion of Social Security benefits.

C. The Medicare program should be expanded to make it possible for younger people to be eligible.

D. Medicare benefits should be expanded to include comprehensive dental, vision and hearing coverage, and the expansion should be funded by raising the Medicare payroll tax from 1.45 percent to 2.00 percent.

E. The clerk of the council is directed to send a copy of this motion to each member of Washington's congressional delegation.