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NEWS RELEASE

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SOCIAL SECURITY LIFTS 13 MILLION SENIORS OUT OF POVERTY **Report Includes State-by-State Data**

Social Security benefits raise nearly 13 million seniors age 65 and older above the poverty line, a new Center report finds. The report provides data on the poverty-reducing effects of Social Security in each state.

“In the average state, Social Security benefits are the difference between being poor and not being poor for roughly a quarter of a million seniors,” said Arloc Sherman, senior researcher at the Center and the report’s lead author. In both Florida and California, Social Security lifts more than a million of the state’s seniors out of poverty.

The figures in the report reflect a three-year average for the period from 2000 through 2002 (the latest year for which these data are available). The poverty line currently is \$9,060 for a single elderly individual and \$11,418 for an elderly couple.

Poverty Rate Cut from Nearly One in Two to One in Twelve

If Social Security income is not counted, nearly half (46.8 percent) of all elderly Americans have incomes below the poverty line. Social Security reduces the poverty rate among the nation’s elderly to one in twelve (8.7 percent).

This effectiveness in reducing poverty is true for every state in the nation. For example, Social Security cuts the elderly poverty rate from 50.2 percent to 8.7 percent in Florida, from 48.0 percent to 5.1 percent in Idaho, and from 37.0 percent to 5.0 percent in Connecticut.

“One of Social Security’s primary goals is to reduce poverty among the elderly, so it is worthwhile to examine how the program is doing in this area, especially at a time when Social Security’s future is the subject of public debate,” noted Sherman. “The program is extremely successful in accomplishing this goal,” Sherman added.

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