Focusing the National Debate on Social Insurance

ANNUAL REPORT July 2012–June 2013
Secretary of the Treasury, Jacob Lew, takes a moment to commemorate the Robert M. Ball Award with NASI summer interns. (From left): Chiara Benham, Jacqueline Risco, Madhu Vulimiri, Ann Mary Philip, Stephanie Kennedy, Andrea Jones, Caitlin Feuer, Secretary Jacob Lew, Emily Johnston, Edmund Saw, Liam O’Laughlin, Samantha Smith, Brian Lamberta, Lauren Siegel, and Marina Kutyavina.
More than a century of experience has demonstrated that social insurance plays a critical role in protecting workers and their families, particularly during tough economic times. Indeed, without America’s great social insurance programs — Social Security, Medicare, Unemployment Insurance, and Workers’ Compensation — the Great Recession of recent memory would have been catastrophic.

The National Academy of Social Insurance (NASI) works to inform policymakers, educators, the media and others — including, most importantly, the public — of the importance of social insurance in making our democracy and economy work better for all Americans.

NASI’s vision for the future of social insurance — to play an important role in a fair and just society that supports a strong democracy and a vibrant economy — is straightforward. But the fluid nature of policy debates and public attitudes suggests that NASI’s mission — to advance solutions to challenges facing the nation by increasing public understanding of how social insurance contributes to economic security — must constantly be revisited, reviewed and reshaped to meet each generation’s needs and communication preferences. It will always be a work in progress.

Clearly, debates about the appropriate role of government, the future of Social Security and Medicare, and the importance of pooling health risks, did not end with the 2012 election and the implementation of the Affordable Care Act. Part of NASI’s ongoing challenge is to discern how the Academy and its members can be most effective in addressing concerns about the affordability and sustainability of social insurance programs, about health care coverage and quality, and about the role of social insurance in confronting the poverty that even working families can experience in today’s America.

This report summarizes NASI’s current work and recent accomplishments. Of particular note was our 25th annual policy conference. Titled “Medicare and Social Security in a Time of Budget Austerity,” it featured parallel tracks that maximized opportunities for conferees to share ideas and insights. Similarly, our Medicare and Social Security summer academies for Washington interns and students were hugely successful in immersing participants — many of whom are embarking on careers in public service — in the complexities of social insurance and challenging them as future leaders to design practical ways to shape the future of these vital programs.

This year, NASI also took steps to add value to the national conversation about health policy, notably by inviting several foundation leaders and policy experts to engage in dialogue with Board members and staff. We extend a similar invitation to all NASI members and other readers of this report. Send us — and our new Board Chair, Bill Arnone — your thoughts on how NASI can best advance the horizons of social insurance. After all, the key principle of social insurance is that we are all in this together.

Lisa Mensah, Chair of the Board
G. Lawrence Atkins, President
About NASI

The National Academy of Social Insurance is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization made up of some 1,000 of the nation’s leading experts on social insurance. NASI’s mission is to advance solutions to challenges facing the nation by increasing public understanding of how social insurance contributes to economic security. Social insurance encompasses broad-based systems that help workers and their families pool risks to protect against loss of income because of retirement, death, disability, or unemployment, and to ensure access to health care. NASI’s staff, based in Washington DC, works with NASI members across the country to achieve its mission of contributing to a more fair and just society, a more vibrant economy, and a stronger democracy.

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NASI Informs and Focuses the Policy Debate

Social insurance cushions workers and their families against several familiar yet often unanticipated risks: job loss and retirement, work-ending disability or injury, illness and long-term dependent care or support needs. NASI works to inform — and remind — us of the resilience that social insurance policies can provide to working families in a volatile economy.

NASI’s 25th annual policy research conference was held on January 31–February 1, 2013, in Washington, DC. The conference, “Medicare and Social Security in a Time of Budget Austerity,” provided an opportunity for 250+ attendees to step back and assess the current economic and demographic context for Medicare and Social Security. The two-day program convened researchers and policy analysts, policy staff from congressional offices, advocates from national and community-based groups, foundation leaders, federal and state program administrators, actuaries, students, journalists, and business executives.

SOCIAL SECURITY — OLD AGE SECURITY AND DISABILITY INSURANCE

NASI provides evidence-based research and public education on Social Security, with support from the Ford Foundation and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and the involvement of our members. Research-driven products in fiscal year 2013 include five briefs, two reports, two motion-graphic videos, six briefing events, and more.

Social Security: Just the Facts, an engaging 3.5-minute video, provides a quick primer for non-expert audiences on Social Security’s purpose, benefits, finances and future. Released in August 2012 to celebrate the 77th anniversary of the Social Security Act, the video was viewed 10,000 times within a week and more than 25,000 times in its first year — unusually robust numbers for a policy video. Just the Facts continues to be a popular public education tool, with active dissemination via social media to reach and inform younger Americans whose voices need to be heard in policy debates.
NASI's new study, *Strengthening Social Security: What Do Americans Want?*, combined public opinion and market research tools to go beyond conventional polling and learn what specific package of policy changes most Americans would favor in order to keep Social Security strong for the future. Support for Social Security is remarkably strong across generations, income levels, race and ethnicity, and political affiliation — with large majorities of Republicans and Democrats agreeing that they value Social Security, they don’t mind paying for it, and they are willing to pay more, if needed, to keep it strong. The preferred policy package would strengthen Social Security by increasing revenues in two ways and increasing benefits in two ways, without any cuts. The study has received widespread media coverage and continues to serve as a powerful public education tool both at the grassroots level and in national policy debates.

NASI hosted a discussion of a new brief, “What’s the News in the 2013 Social Security Trustees Report?” on June 3, 2013. NASI also produced a brief entitled *Social Security Disability Insurance: Action Needed to Strengthen Finances*. It explained how Congress has frequently and without controversy reallocated the Social Security tax rate between the disability and the retirement and survivors insurance funds in order to equalize their solvency. NASI also published a brief on *Supplemental Security Income for Children with Disabilities* to better explain the role of these benefits in aiding low-income children with disabilities and their families.

**Amplifying the Benefits of Delaying Social Security** is a new public education project to engage community based organizations, retirement planners and other trusted advisors in helping older workers understand the lifelong advantages of delaying claiming Social Security benefits if they can. The project is supported by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, with supplemental funds from the Retirement Research Foundation in the coming year.

**WORKERS’ COMPENSATION**

NASI produces a unique national report that analyzes data on workers’ compensation costs, benefits and coverage from 56 state and other jurisdictions. This work is primarily funded under contracts with the Social Security Administration, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and the U.S. Department of Labor.

*Workers’ Compensation: Benefits, Coverage, and Costs, 2010* was released in August 2012. This year, for the first time, the report included employer costs by state and was cited in more than 50 media outlets, including trade press such as BenefitsPro, Insurance Journal, Insurance Networking News, and more. New data was collected for 2011 and analyzed for the next report in this annual series.

Support for Social Security is remarkably strong across generations, income levels, race and ethnicity, and political affiliation.
NASI’s workers’ compensation members also began offering and framing additional issues to examine — with a focus on those that workers’ comp shares with other social insurance programs. These will be explored in the new year.

LONG-TERM SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

In the policy world, what once was called “Long Term Care” is now referred to as “Long Term Services and Supports” (LTSS), a term that more accurately describes the range of assistance that Americans who are not functionally independent may need in order to help them maintain the highest possible quality of life. Because the risk of needing LTSS at some point is widespread, NASI views the many policies governing LTSS as social insurance — and a policy area much in need of focused and sustained attention, particularly given the rapid growth of the at-risk population as the baby boomers age.

“Social Insurance: A Critical Base for Long-Term Services and Supports,” co-authored by NASI President, Larry Atkins, and Vice President for Health Policy, Lee Goldberg (March 2013), describes social insurance-based approaches to financing LTSS for the large number of those in need who cannot self-insure but may not spend down in order to qualify for Medicaid; explores how Social Security and Medicare might provide a platform to help individuals finance their LTSS needs; and discusses financing strategies for new benefits, whether cash-based or service-based. The SCAN Foundation supported the paper and a well-attended symposium on “What’s The State of LTSS Financing — and What Are the Options for the Future?”

A policy seminar, “Long-Term Care: Tying It All Together — Considering Long-Term Care In an Era of Health Reform,” held on June 25, 2013, highlighted some of the most promising initiatives at the federal, state and community levels to reform existing health care delivery systems in order to better serve the tens of millions of Americans who will need a mix of health and long-term care services during the next three decades. Insights from this seminar helped to inform and complement the work of the 15-member national Commission on Long-Term Care, charged with advising Congress on long-term care reform and expected to issue its report in mid-September 2013.
NASI continues to plan a study on *State Networks for Long-Term Services and Supports*, focused on successful or promising state-based initiatives to finance coordination and delivery of LTSS. Support from the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) made this planning possible.

**MEDICARE AND HEALTH POLICY**

During the past year, NASI’s work in this area focused largely on educating young leaders about various options for health care reform and implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

“Establishing the Technology Infrastructure for Health Insurance Exchanges under the Affordable Care Act: Initial Observations from the ‘Early Innovator’ and ‘Advanced Implementation’ States,” co-authored by Michael Tuty and NASI Member Jay Himmelstein, provides guidance on developing state-based technology infrastructures based on the experiences of states that are most advanced in their ACA implementation. NASI partnered with UMASS Medical School to release this in September 2012. This was the final report from NASI’s Robert Wood Johnson Foundation-funded project on implementing health insurance exchanges.

NASI views policies governing long-term services and supports as a policy area much in need of focused and sustained attention.

NASI also released a policy brief: “Medicare Finances: Findings from the 2013 Trustees Report” in May 2013. This annual summary of the findings of the Medicare Trustees Report included a brief history and description of Medicare. NASI added two fact sheets to its series aimed at shedding light on the program’s financing, solvency, and contributions to financial security and equity: “Health Care Spending Trends: Medicare and Private Health Insurance” addresses some of the reasons why Medicare outlays have generally grown more slowly than those of private health insurers in recent years. “Is Medicare Solvent and Sustainable?” explains that solvency and sustainability are two useful but very different concepts for assessing the financial health of Medicare.

NASI Engages its Members
1,000 of the nation’s top experts in social insurance

2012 saw NASI’s membership grow to include some 1,000 of the nation’s top experts in social insurance. NASI welcomed 73 new members.

Newly elected members and their affiliation at the time of election:

Joel S. Arlo, Manatt Health Solutions
Deborah Bachrach, Manatt, Phelps, & Phillips, LLC
Joseph R. Baker III, Medicare Rights Center
Karen Barnes, McDonald’s Corporation
Linda Bennett, American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO
Hal Bergan, Fast Enterprises, LLC
Donald M. Berwick, Center for American Progress
Thomas N. Bethell, National Academy of Social Insurance
Barry Bluestone, School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs, Northeastern University
Terry Bogyo, WorkSafeBC
Jeff Bontrager, Colorado Health Institute
Patricia M. Boozang, Manatt Health Solutions
Heather Boushey, Center for American Progress
John Burbank, Economic Opportunity Institute
Mike Chernew, Harvard Medical School
Yvette Chocolaad, National Association of State Workforce Agencies
Pamela Doty, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Indivar Dutta-Gupta, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

Above: Marge Ginsburg, Center for Healthcare Decisions and Joe Baker, Medicare Rights Center

Christina Smith Fitzpatrick, AARP
Laura Fortman, Frances Perkins Center
Richard Frank, Harvard University
Shawn Fremstad, Center for Economic and Policy Research
Scott Frey, Social Security Administration
Donald E. Fuerst, American Academy of Actuaries
Howard Gleckman, The Urban Institute
Leslie M. Greenwald, RTI International
Charlene Harrington, California HealthCare Foundation
Jeffrey Hayes, Institute for Women’s Policy Research
Catherine Hess, National Academy for State Health Policy
Lara E. Hinz, Women’s Institute for a Secure Retirement
Jane Horvath, Merck & Co.
Melissa Kahn, MetLife
Ruth Katz, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Krystal Knight, Medicare Rights Center
Gary Koenig, AARP Public Policy Institute
Sharon Lacy, Bedrock Capital Management
Eric Laursen, Author and Journalist
Alex Lawson, Social Security Works
On June 25th, NASI honored Alice M. Rivlin, Senior Fellow in Economic Studies at the Brookings Institution and a Visiting Professor at Georgetown University, with the 2013 Robert M. Ball Award for Outstanding Achievements in Social Insurance. To honor one of the most distinguished voices on economic and fiscal policies shaping social insurance, NASI members were joined by Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew, former Senator Tom Daschle, DC Former Mayor Anthony Williams, and Professor Alan Blinder. The award ceremony was co-chaired by Robert D. Reischauer and Donna Shalala and attended by 300+ policy, research, advocacy, and business leaders who share a common passion for strengthening social insurance and reflecting on its important role in a vibrant economy and in providing economic security for all Americans.
In the fall of 2012, NASI welcomed a number of new ASSOCIATE MEMBERS, including:

Tom Arnold-Forster, BA, Cambridge University
Alicia Atkinson, MPP, Brandeis University
Elizabeth Blair, MPP, Brandeis University
Halley Brunsteter, MPH, University of Washington
Anne Cleary, BA, Miami University
Tessa Conroy, PhD, Colorado State University
Norma Herrera, MPA, University of Texas
Jess Liu, MS, MPH, Columbia University
Tina Liu, MPH, Columbia University
Thang (Thomas) Nguyen, BS, Ohio Wesleyan University
Brittany Reid, BA, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill
Andrea Taverna, BA, University of Michigan
Ami Wazlawik, MPP, University of Minnesota
Michael Wodka, BA, Cornell University
Marius Kothor, BA, Rochester University
Chukwunyere (Chidi) Ahaghotu, MPH, Columbia University
Sarah Gonzaga, MPP, Brandeis University
Jena Grady, MS, Arizona State University
Talib Jabbar, MS, Lund University
Irvin Moore, MSW, University of Pennsylvania
Theresa Eugene, BA, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Krista Simeone, MS, George Washington University

2013 SUMMER INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS
In 2013, 16 students were selected and matched for NASI’s 2013 programs. The students completed 12-week internships at NASI members’ organizations across the DC metro area, including the Alliance for Community Health Plans, Government Accountability Office, Senior Services America, Inc., Social Security Administration, and the American Health Care Association.

“[Our intern] was an integral part of the health policy team over the summer. From the beginning of her time here, she was given substantive work that was both time-sensitive and essential for the completion of the team’s project goals. She greatly increased the capacity of our team and allowed us to undertake and complete several projects that we might not have been able to complete otherwise.”
2013 Washington Interns on Social Insurance

Caitlin Feuer, Brandeis University
Emily Johnston, Emory University
Marina Kutyavina, University of California, San Diego
Brian Lamberta, Hunter College of the City University of New York
Liam O’Laughlin, Brandeis University
Jacqueline Risco, University of Florida
Edmund Saw, College of William and Mary
Samantha Smith, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
Madhu Vulimiri, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

“As an Intern Supervisor,] we continue to be impressed by the quality and the caliber of students that NASI recruits. Our hope is that this program is as beneficial for the intern as it is for us.”

2013 Somers Aging and Long-Term Care Research Interns

Chiara Benham, University of Minnesota
Shreyasi Deb, University of Maryland, Baltimore Co.
Ann Mary Phillip, Columbia University
Lauren Siegel, University of Minnesota
Georgianne Tiu, University of Kentucky

Nathan J. Stark Intern for Non-Profit Development

Stephanie Kennedy, University of Southern California

Eileen Sweeney Graduate Intern in Disability Policy

Andrea Jones, University of California, Los Angeles

2013 Heinz Dissertation Award

The 21st annual John Heinz Dissertation Award was given to Nathaniel Hendren for his dissertation titled “Essays on Information and Insurance Markets.” Nominated by NASI member Amy Finkelstein, Hendren received his Ph.D. in Economics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology last June. The Heinz award was presented at NASI’s 25th annual policy conference.

Demystifying Social Security: 2012 Summer Academy for Interns

NASI’s 2012 Social Security Intern Academy kicked off the re-release of NASI and Economic Policy Institute’s A Young Person’s Guide to Social Security. Each of the 130 attendees, speakers, and table experts received a copy of the Guide and all three authors attended the event. Co-author Kathryn Edwards spoke during the opening session and provided remarks on why Social Security is important to young people. Co-author Alex Hertel-Fernandez participated in the debate session. An accompanying video, “Demystifying Social Security,” provided an engaging look at young professionals’ stake in Social Security.

Intern Academy attendees discussed their plans to ensure Social Security’s solvency and considered options to improve benefits. The most popular options selected by the majority of groups were combined to form “The Intern Solution to Social Security.” Overall, the interns chose to include three benefit adequacy options — the most popular of which was reinstating the student benefit up to age 22 — as well as three options to raise revenue for the program. None of the options to cut benefits garnered enough support to be included in the intern solution.

“NASI provided amazing opportunities to connect with leaders in the field, all of whom were extremely gracious and willing to provide mentorship and career advice.”
NASI hosted a Medicare Academy for the first time in the summer of 2012. The full-day event brought together over 90 interns, students and young professionals to discuss the Medicare program and its future. The event featured prominent guest speakers, such as Richard Foster, chief actuary at the Centers for Medicaid & Medicare Services and Maya Rockeymoore of Global Policy Solutions; expert panels; an interactive policy exercise; and a debate between two young professionals with differing views of Medicare. Attendees walked away with a comprehensive understanding of how Medicare is structured and financed, who its enrollees are, and what some of the challenges are going forward.

“Medicare is a daunting program to research and understand; I think that the whole design of today’s program as well as the content were fabulous.”

CONFERENCE SCHOLARSHIPS:
For the third year running, NASI offered full scholarships to young professionals to attend our annual policy conference. Post-conference, scholarship winners analyzed issues highlighted at the conference (available on NASI’s “Discuss” blog):

- “We Are A Rich Country: The False Dichotomy of Caring for the Old Versus Burdening the Young” by Hannah Weinberger-Divack
- “Immigration: A Solution for Social Security Insolvency?” by Madhulika Vulimiri
- “Social Security: The Choice is Ours” by Christina Trusty
- “Affordable Health Care Made Today For Tomorrow: Integrated Primary Care” by Geoffrey M. Orokos
- “Delaying Retirement: Should Average Life Expectancy Determine Retirement Age?” by Tatsuko Go Hollo
- “Educating Americans on How to Save for Retirement” by James Chan
In FY2013 (ending June 30, 2013), NASI received revenue totaling $2,362,653 and incurred expenses totaling $2,038,371.

Over three quarters — 77% — of NASI’s expenditures went directly towards programs and membership services. Of that proportion, policy research expenditures comprised 55%, with 9% spent on our developing younger social insurance leaders. The annual conference held steady at 9% of expenses. 23% was needed to meet overhead expenses, which included a strong focus on raising revenues for new projects and programs in the new fiscal year.

In FY2013, the majority of NASI’s funding came from multi-year grants from major foundations and government contracts. Institutional and individual contributions support NASI’s leadership development programs and special outreach and education initiative. Funds earned from special events, conference registration fees, and membership dues support strategic planning and provide critical seed funding for new projects.

By the end of FY2013, NASI’s grants or temporarily restricted net assets — the pipeline to support programs in future fiscal years — had increased significantly over FY2012. This put NASI on a healthier financial trajectory for FY2014, though a budget funding gap remains to be closed in order for all programmatic objectives to be achieved.
NASI’s Board and staff look forward to continued national debates over the appropriate role of government, the solvency and adequacy of Social Security, Medicare and unemployment insurance, the importance of pooling health risks as broadly as possible, insuring workers’ safer work lives, and providing public policy leadership for a long-term services and supports policy.

NASI’s expert members increase the value of its unique work in the policy research and education arena in Washington, DC and in the states. Our Board has noted that membership engagement is worth more effort, so staff have begun to work in additional ways, with member volunteers to add significant value and breadth to NASI’s work. NASI’s regular messages, briefs, videos, reports and discounts are designed to connect the value of membership in NASI to the democracy that governs us.

NASI has been building and engaging a younger audience of students. Photos in this report show their interest in NASI’s Social Security and Medicare Academies and conferences. Behind the scenes, NASI is growing partnerships with other groups whose constituencies are future and younger workers, like the Roosevelt Institute Campus Network and community leaders, like the League of Women Voters, and the education arms of the National Urban League, the National Council of La Raza, and the National Association of Social Workers.
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You can build NASI’s capacity to inform policymakers, educators, the media and others — including, most importantly, the public — of the importance of social insurance in making our democracy and economy work better for all Americans.

More urgently, in a challenging fundraising climate — when grant funding from foundations that have traditionally supported policy research is scarce — like the environment NASI faced as we entered fiscal year 2013, and again, as we enter fiscal year 2014, your individual support at one of the giving levels below will help NASI’s work of infusing more facts into the national social insurance debate.

**VISIONARY: $2,000+**
You enable NASI to engage in strategic planning for long-term impact on public policy-making and public understanding of social insurance. As a VISIONARY, you are invited to participate in an annual “brainstorming” meeting with NASI’s Board of Directors.

**STRATEGIST: $1,000+**
Your contribution makes it possible for NASI to develop ideas and recommendations from Academy Members into new research and education projects that yield social insurance policy and implementation strategies for today and for the future.

**EDUCATOR: $500+**
You support NASI’s ability to widely disseminate valuable research findings, policy analyses and recommendations; maintain our website and provide free access to numerous publications.

**MENTOR: $250+**
Your contribution builds leadership development efforts, supplements honoraria/scholarships for summer interns, and helps NASI reach a new generation of leaders in the field of social insurance.

**FRIEND: $100+**
Your gift reflects the conviction that social insurance plays an important role in a fair and just society.

**SUPPORTER:**
A gift of any amount is greatly appreciated and will support NASI’s mission.

If you have any questions about making a bequest or other ways of supporting NASI, please contact Pamela J. Larson, Executive Vice President, at 202-452-8097, by email: plarson@nasi.org.

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