

# 1986- 2026

## CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF THE ACADEMY



**This year marks a defining moment for the National Academy of Social Insurance.** As we celebrate 40 years of advancing understanding, collaboration, and solutions around social insurance, we do so at a time of profound change for the systems that millions of people rely on for economic security, care, and dignity across the lifespan.

Four decades after the Academy's founding, the questions before us are as urgent as ever: how to ensure the continued strength of the social insurance programs that underpin our social contract; how to ensure they can meet the needs of current and future generations; and how to modernize our systems for a changing economy and an aging population. Underpinning debates over the future of Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and more is the question, **“What kind of society do we want to be?”**

The Academy and its 1,400-strong member community are answering that call. Through educating the public and policymakers and convening timely conversations; informing the debate with our new Speakers Bureaus and initiatives like our Social Security Rapid Response Collaborative; and new policy collaborations such as the Aging and Disability Health Policy Lab and the Disability Economic Policy Research Consortium, the Academy is proud to continue its legacy of social insurance leadership at this critical time.

At the same time, we are investing in the future by supporting emerging leaders through the Academy's paid internship programs, cross-generational mentorship, our new Social Security Leadership Academy, and the recently launched Benefits Futures Studio, a major new collaboration with our friends at the Aspen Institute.

We invite you to join us as we mark this milestone and look ahead as we continue building a social insurance ecosystem grounded in the truth that **we're in this together.**

In love and solidarity,

**Rebecca Vallas, CEO**

National Academy of Social Insurance



**FOUNDED IN 1986, the National Academy of Social Insurance is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization comprised of the nation's leading experts on social insurance policy, practice, research, and innovation.** From Social Security and Supplemental Security Income to Medicare, Medicaid, and the Affordable Care Act; to Workers' Compensation and Unemployment Insurance; to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and income-boosting tax credits, America's social insurance ecosystem serves as the bedrock of economic protection against the risks of life—such as when we retire, lose a job, experience disability or illness, or lose a family breadwinner. For nearly 40 years, the Academy and its powerful member network have championed the safeguarding, strengthening, and modernization of social insurance, working to increase public understanding of how it contributes to economic security.



## OUR FOUNDER: ROBERT M. BALL

**The National Academy of Social Insurance was founded in 1986 by Robert M. Ball—Social Security’s longest-serving Commissioner and a transformative force behind the modern social insurance system.**

No individual has done more to advance American social insurance programs than Robert M. Ball. From his early appointment in a field office to his selection as Commissioner of Social Security by President Kennedy in 1962, to advisory roles in each of the following presidential administrations, Bob Ball sought a balance between political pragmatism and his determination to protect the principles of social insurance. He was the single most influential individual in advancing American social insurance programs for over 60 years.

The Academy’s founding took place shortly after the 1983 Social Security reforms, in an era of intense debate over the future of social insurance. Robert Ball and other leaders in the field felt that *independent, factual analysis* was needed to inform policymaking and public understanding.





Bob Ball served as Commissioner of Social Security from 1962 to 1973. He also played a crucial role in the origin of Medicare in 1965, and then successfully carried out the ambitious task of implementing the program.

Ball founded the National Academy of Social Insurance in 1986 and continued to advise presidential administrations and policymakers and to write on Social Security, Medicare, national health insurance and welfare until his death in January 2008 at the age of 93.



## THE ACADEMY'S FOUNDING MEMBERS

At the Academy's founding alongside Bob Ball stood over 160 founding Members, many of whom remain Members today. These founding Members represented scholars, industry leaders, and advocates at the forefront of social insurance. They set the tone for the Academy as a convener across policy sectors, bringing together leaders in healthcare, aging, disability, retirement, social security and organized labor.

*We thank these founding members for their incredible service to the Academy:*

Henry Aaron  
Jodie Allen  
Drew Altman  
Nancy Altman  
William Arnone  
Larry Atkins  
Robert Berenson  
Edward Berkowitz  
David Blumenthal  
Sheila Burke  
Gary Burtless  
John Burton  
Philip Caper  
Deborah Chollet  
Francis Crowley  
Peter Diamond  
James Ellenberger  
Carroll Estes  
Lynn Etheredge  
Judith Feder  
Karen Ferguson  
Daniel Fox  
Mark Freeland

Lori Hansen  
Karen Holden  
Joseph Humphreys  
Karen Ignagni  
Charles Kahn  
Frederick Kilbourne  
Eric Kingson  
Robert Kuttner  
Judith Lave  
Jerry Mashaw  
Stephen McConnell  
Robert McGarrah  
Marilyn Moon  
James Morone  
Alicia Munnell  
Solomon Mussey  
Joseph Newhouse  
John Palmer  
Ron Pollack  
Joseph Quinn  
Robert Reischauer  
Virginia Reno  
Jane Ross

Eric Shulman  
Paul Starr  
Lawrence Summers  
Roger Thomas  
Lawrence Thompson  
Fernando Torres-Gil  
Paul Van de Water  
Richard Victor  
Bruce Vladeck  
Wayne Vroman  
Kenneth Wing  
Sandra Wise  
Stuart Altman  
Emily Andrews  
Jean Bandler  
Peter Barth  
Dwight Bartlett  
Robert Blendon  
M. Bowler  
Philip Briggs  
Yung-Ping Chen  
Norman Daniels

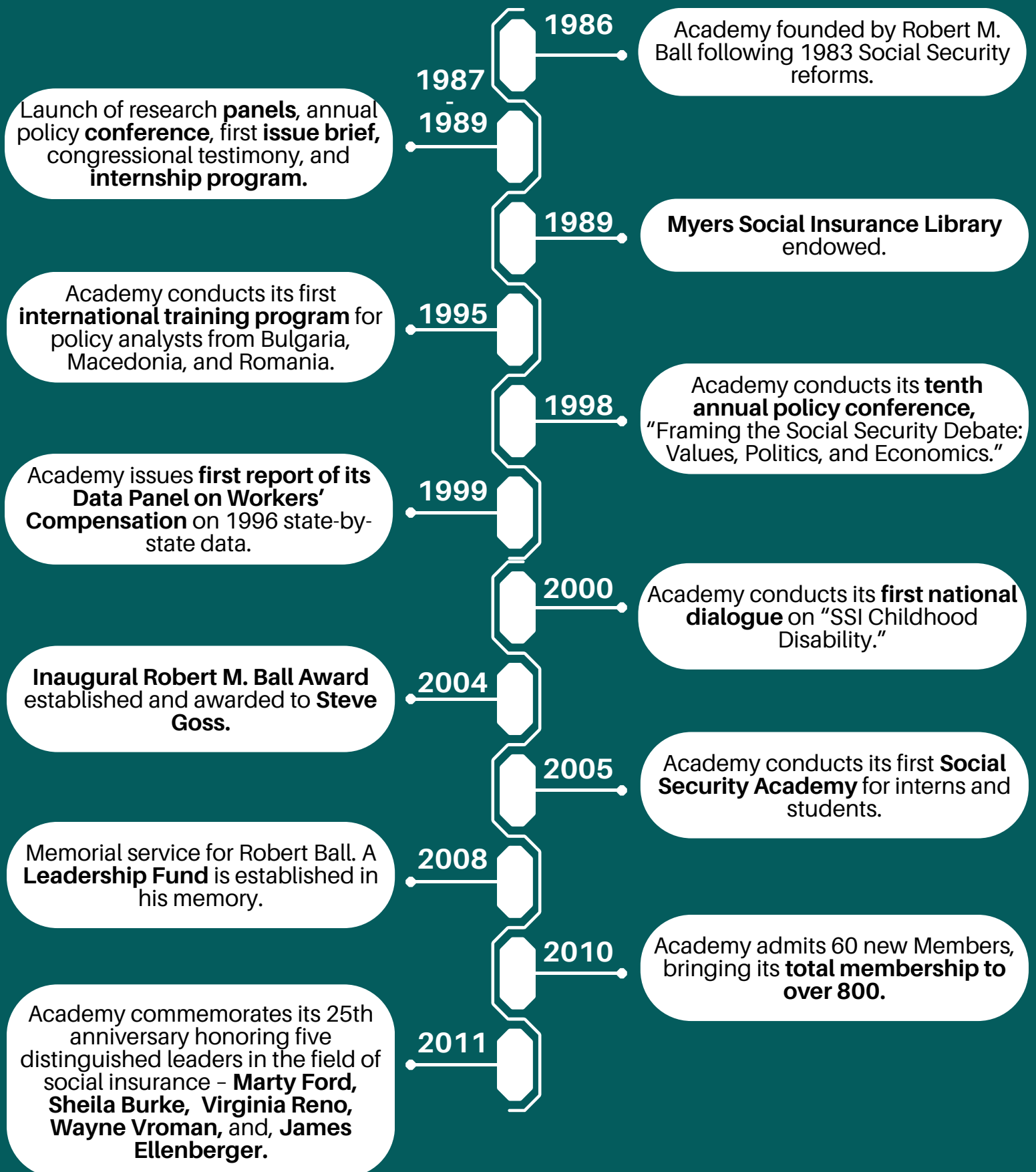
## THE ACADEMY'S FOUNDING MEMBERS

Paul Ginsburg  
Janice Gregory  
Daniel Halperin  
John Hambor  
Theodore Groom  
James Haughton  
Benjamin Heineman  
William Hsiao  
Judith Jones  
Dean Leimer  
David Lindeman  
Walter Maher  
Theodore Marmor  
David Mechanic  
Joseph Onek  
George Rejda  
Lisbeth Schorr  
Jack Shelton  
P. Shipp  
Mark Smith  
Rosemary Stevens  
Marina Weiss  
Howard Young  
Wendell Primus  
Brian Biles  
Suzanne Blouin  
Barry Bosworth  
Lawrence Brown  
Richard Burkhauser  
Alexander Capron  
Dale Detlefs  
Ronald Ehrenberg

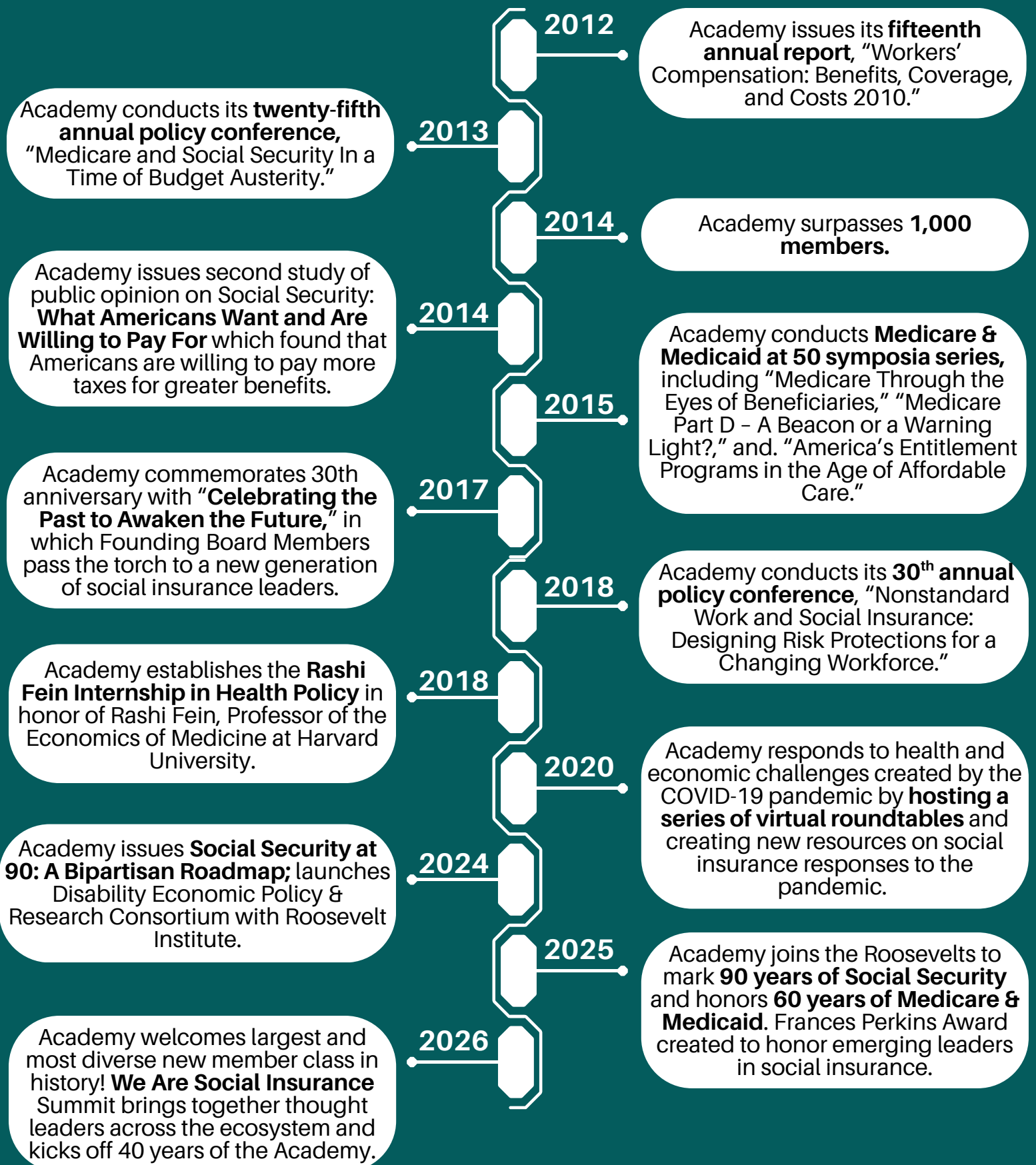
John Rother  
Diane Rowland  
Leonard Schaeffer  
Bruce Schobel  
Jerry Hausman  
Howard Hiatt  
John Iglehart  
Stanley Jones  
Roland King  
Robert McGlotten  
James Mongan  
Rudolph Penner  
June Robinson  
Dallas Salisbury  
Harvey Sapolsky  
William Scanlon  
George Schieber  
William Schwartz  
Walter Shur  
Deborah Stone  
John Sweeney  
Gordon Trapnell  
Donald Wasserman  
Robert Ball  
Harry Ballantyne  
Francisco Bayo  
Monroe Berkowitz  
Merton Bernstein  
Saul Blaustein  
Jerome Brazda

Patricia Dilley  
Stuart Eizenstat  
John Fibiger  
Gilbert Fisher  
Mitch Greenlick  
Lisle Carter  
Martha Derthick  
Rashi Fein  
John Fleming  
William Fullerton  
Milton Gwartzman  
Ruth Hanft  
William Harman  
Erwin Hytner  
Robert Kane  
Phillip Lee  
Lawrence Lewin  
Dan McGill  
Robert Myers  
Paul O'Neill  
Uwe Reinhardt  
Paul Rettig  
Dorothy Rice  
Julius Richmond  
Alice Rivlin  
Stanford Ross  
Charles Schultze  
Cecil Sheps  
Lawrence Smedley  
Stanley Wallack  
Joshua Wiener  
T. Franklin Williams

## THE ACADEMY THROUGH THE YEARS



## THE ACADEMY THROUGH THE YEARS



## ROBERT M. BALL AWARD

Each year, the Academy brings together leaders from across the nation to recognize bold, visionary leadership in social insurance with the **Robert M. Ball Award**. Since 2004, 30 extraordinary social insurance leaders have been recognized with this flagship award.

The Robert M. Ball Award honors the Academy's founder, Social Security's longest-serving Commissioner and a transformative force behind Social Security, Medicare, and the broader U.S. social insurance system.

The Academy's signature annual gala, the Ball Award is more than a celebration. It's a moment to elevate changemakers whose leadership is shaping the future of economic security; catalyze conversation among leaders across government, business, labor, academia, and advocacy; and ignite energy and investment in building a more equitable and inclusive social insurance system for the next generation.

In 2025, the Academy expanded this tradition by introducing the **Frances Perkins Next Generation Award**, launched in partnership with the Frances Perkins Center. Named for Frances Perkins, the visionary architect of the New Deal, the award honors rising leaders who embody her courage, imagination, and dedication to the common good—and who are helping carry the social insurance mission forward for the next generation.

### Previous Honorees:

2025: Martin O'Malley & Michael J. Astrue

2024: William J. Arnone, Marty Ford, & William M. Rodgers III

2023: Angela Glover Blackwell & David Blumenthal

2022: Marian Wright Edelman, Peter Edelman, & Jacob Lew

2021: Robert Greenstein & Kilolo Kijakazi

2020: Jacob Hacker & Virginia Reno

2019: Carroll Estes & Theodore Marmor

2018: Nancy & Stuart Altman

2016: William Spriggs

2015: Karen Davis

2014: Marilyn Moon

2013: Alice M. Rivlin

2012: Robert D. Reischauer

2010: John C. Rother

2009: Alicia H. Munnell

2008: Peter A. Diamond

2007: Henry Aaron

2006: Monroe Berkowitz

2005: Bruce C. Vladeck

2004: Stephen C. Goss



# MEETING THE MOMENT: OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

## OUR VISION

A society where **economic security, care, and dignity** are assured across the lifespan.

## ACHIEVING THIS VISION WILL TAKE

**Policy-making that puts people first**, rooted in their real needs and experiences, and responsive to the challenges they face every day.

**A strong, inclusive community** that brings together diverse voices to inform, strengthen, and sustain social insurance policy through collaboration.

**A dynamic national system** offering true security through universal income and health protections that complement our market and job-based insurance structures.

**Our vision will have been realized** when everyone has a strong foundation for health, well-being, and opportunity; no one experiences material hardship due to disability, aging, job loss, or poverty; economic security is protected during life's transitions; and all have access to high-quality, affordable care in homes and communities.

## OUR STRATEGIES



**Network-building and member engagement** to foster a strong and cohesive social insurance community—the “stewards of social insurance.”



**Convening experts and stakeholders across sectors** to analyze timely topics and develop policy options to strengthen social insurance.



**Developing and uplifting research, analysis, and policy ideas** for policy makers, key stakeholders, social insurance experts, and advocates.



**Informing and shaping the national conversation** on the critical role of social insurance in securing economic and health well-being for all.



**Nurturing a strong, diverse pipeline of emerging leaders and established experts** to advance and strengthen the future of social insurance.

**We work on these issues** with and for social insurance experts, policymakers, the media, service providers, community organizations, and current and future beneficiaries—guided by our members. We do this because we believe in our shared humanity and interconnectedness, and that no one should live in poverty. A strong social insurance system is essential to upholding these values.

## CURRENT INITIATIVES

For 40 years, the Academy has advanced a collective effort to secure and strengthen the systems that protect people across the lifespan—whether through retirement, disability, illness, job loss, or caregiving. Today, the Academy continues this mission through a range of initiatives that deepen understanding, foster collaboration, and shape policy conversations. Below are a few highlights of our current work:

**The Benefits Futures Studio**, a collaboration between the Academy and the Aspen Institute, is a new platform for visioning and building a people-centered benefits system. Learn more at [benefitsfuturesstudio.org](https://benefitsfuturesstudio.org).

**The Social Security Rapid Response Collaborative** is a multi-organization alliance informing and shaping the Social Security debate—and providing narrative leadership to the field.

**The Disability Economic Policy Research Consortium**, a partnership with the Roosevelt Institute, convenes more than 50 groups to build an economy that works for disabled people. Learn more at [disabilityecon.org](https://disabilityecon.org).

**The Aging and Disability Health Policy Lab**, a collaboration with The SCAN Foundation, is developing model policies to close gaps in health coverage for older and disabled Americans.

**The Social Security and Medicare and Medicaid Speakers Bureaus** elevates expert voices to inform the national dialogue, counter misinformation, and build public understanding of social insurance..

**The Social Security Leadership Academy** is cultivating the next generation of leaders to shape the future of Social Security.

**The Task Force on Artificial Intelligence, Emerging Technology, and Disability Benefits** guides ethical, inclusive AI use at the Social Security Administration—improving access for millions relying on disability benefits.

**The Academy’s Senior Fellows Program** engages national experts to shape research, inform policy, and strengthen public understanding of social insurance through trusted, independent leadership.

**The Academy’s Internship Program** provides paid, career-launching opportunities for emerging leaders in social insurance policy—offering hands-on experience, mentorship, and lasting connections,

**This is just a snapshot of our current initiatives to inform public debate, influence policy, and strengthen the community of experts, advocates, and stakeholders working to ensure economic security and well-being across generations.**

## INTERNSHIPS & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

At the Academy, nurturing a strong, diverse, pipeline of emerging leaders in social insurance is a key pillar of our work. Through programs like the Academy's flagship internships and Associate Membership pipeline, the Academy has become a jumping off point for professionals throughout social insurance. Since its creation, the Academy internship program has been a launching point for over **400 young professionals**. Former Academy interns have gone on to lead organizations, serve on Capitol Hill, work as medical professionals, and much more.



"My Academy internship was instrumental in developing my career in aging/long-term care policy... My Somers intern placement was with Dr. Robyn Stone, the head of the policy division at Leading Age. Dr. Stone taught me so much about LTSS, housing, and direct worker issues. **She continued to mentor me my entire career, and we are still in touch.**"

- **Brenda Sulick, Somers '02**

"My Academy internship had a huge influence on my career path, as **I ended up working at the Academy for five years!** The relationships I cultivated during my time at the Academy have been invaluable."

- **Griffin Murphy, Bernstein '18**

"My Academy experience as an Eileen Sweeney intern was a turning point; it showed me that **social insurance policy was exactly what I wanted to pursue** and gave me the chance to engage directly with the kinds of trade-offs policymakers face every day."

- **Taylor Carty, Sweeney '24**



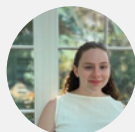
## OUR TEAM

The Academy is powered by top experts across our staff, Senior Fellows, Board, and its over 1,400 Members—leaders in Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, SSI, unemployment insurance, workers' compensation, long-term care, and other key benefits systems.

### STAFF



**Rebecca Vallas**  
Chief Executive  
Officer



**Dora Mendelson**  
Chief of Staff



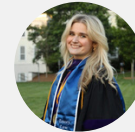
**Ariella Jailal**  
Director of  
Leadership  
Development  
& Events



**Kenya Mahone**  
Program Coordinator



**Zane Snyder Cox**  
Communications  
Fellow



**Taylor Reilly**  
Equal Justice  
Works Fellow

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Senior Fellow &  
Advisor to the CEO



**Jason Fichtner**  
Senior Fellow



**Alison Barkoff**  
Senior Fellow



**Michele Evermore**  
Senior Fellow



**Kathryn Edwards**  
Senior Fellow



**Katie Savin**  
Ford Fellow in  
Disability Policy Research



**Tyler Bond**  
Senior Fellow

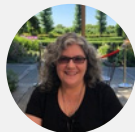
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Board Chair



**Josephine Kalipeni**  
Vice Chair



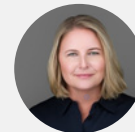
**Merrill Friedman**  
Treasurer  
Elevance Health



**Tracey Gronniger**  
Secretary  
Justice in Aging



**Bradley Hardy**  
The McCourt School  
of Public Policy



**Debra Whitman**  
AARP



**Tricia Neuman**  
KFF



**Bob Blancato**  
Matz, Blancato and  
Associates



**Connie Garner**  
Garner Strategies



**Aparna Mathur**  
Amazon



**John Slatery**  
American Federation  
of Teachers



**Chad Bolt**  
FirstFocus on Children



**Alaine Perry**



**Joshua McCabe**  
Niskanen Center



**Katherine Hempstead**  
Robert Wood  
Johnson Foundation



**Stuart Butler**  
Brookings Institute



*"Social insurance isn't just a set of government programs. It's a living expression of our interdependence—and how we show up for each other when it matters most."*

Rebecca D. Vallas, Chief Executive Officer





We are social insurance.