



Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) caused a furor in early March when he told reporters that he wanted to pass Social Security, but that in "terms of whether it will be a week, a month, six months or a year, as to when we bring something to the floor, it's just too early."

Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.) took the rare step of issuing a statement rebuking his leader for even suggesting that success might not be realized this year. The next day, Frist went to the Senate floor and declared: "We need to do it this year -- not next year, but this year."

Hastert also has said that he wants to complete the bill this year, and that it will be harder next year. In his comments to the National Journal, he made it plain that Congress has more selling to do, even before it begins grappling with the painful choices involved in addressing projected revenue shortfalls as baby boomers retire.

"When you are dealing with Social Security, there is always a nervousness," the speaker said. "This is something that you have to convince people that there really is a problem. . . . You can't take their Social Security, mash it up, and not have a good result."

Hastert added in the interview, conducted Monday, that he feels "cautiously optimistic that we can get this thing done."

"Most members, down in their heart, know that what we are trying to do is the right thing to do," he said. "It's a question of whether it's convenient politically, or whether they can stand the test back home. We have organized resistance on this thing, and you have to get through that."

Bush aides continued to emphasize urgency. Rob Nichols, the chief Treasury Department spokesman, said: "We are committed to working with Congress to pass bipartisan legislation that strengthens and secures Social Security for future generations this year."

## POLITICS TRIVIA

### Friday's Question:

During the 2004 presidential campaign, what public announcement was actually an April Fool's Day joke played by one candidate on his opponent?

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