

WE'RE GOING YOUR WAY  **Save \$25 off a one-way rental.** [GET THIS DEAL](#) 

The Truth-O-Meter Says:



"Fiorina's plan would mean slashing Social Security and Medicare."

[Barbara Boxer](#) on Friday, October 15th, 2010 in a campaign ad

Barbara Boxer says Carly Fiorina would penalize the elderly to balance the books

A new ad from California Democratic Sen. Barbara Boxer takes a broad-brush approach to painting Republican opponent Carly Fiorina as extreme.

"Carly Fiorina, she's against banning assault weapons, and that's reckless and dangerous. She's for risky new oil drilling that could threaten our jobs. Fiorina's plan would mean slashing Social Security and Medicare, which would devastate seniors. And she'd make abortion a crime. No wonder Fiorina is endorsed by Sarah Palin. Carly Fiorina, just too extreme for California."

The Fiorina campaign blasted the ad. "We demand that she immediately remove this ad from the airwaves and apologize to Carly, and California voters, for not only this deliberate and blatant distortion of reality, but also for her refusal to have an honest and serious debate about the issues during this crucial time for our nation," said campaign manager Marty Wilson in a written statement.

The Boxer campaign said they're standing by the ad. Both campaigns invited us to fact-check it. Here, we wanted to look at whether "Fiorina's plan would mean slashing Social Security and Medicare, which would devastate seniors."

To support the claim, the Boxer campaign points to several of Fiorina's public statements in which she said entitlement reform was necessary to rein in government spending. (Technically speaking, entitlements are any kind of government benefit program, but people usually mean Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.)

As we reviewed Fiorina's position on entitlements, we couldn't help but notice one thing: Fiorina isn't terribly specific about what she thinks entitlement reform should include. She does say often that she does not want to cut benefits for current retirees or those nearing retirement.

We should note here that *most* of the candidates from *both* parties say that entitlement reform is necessary, and pretty much all say we shouldn't cut benefits for current retirees or those nearing retirement. You might call these generic talking points.

Perhaps the best discussion of Fiorina's specific views on entitlements came in an interview with Chris Wallace of Fox News on Oct. 17, 2010. Wallace asked her several times about how to cut Medicare or Social Security, with Fiorina dodging the questions. The last exchange went like this:

Wallace: "I'm going to try one last time, and if you don't want to answer it, Ms. Fiorina, you don't have to."

Fiorina: "It's not a question of not wanting to answer it."

Wallace: "Then let me ask the question, if I may, please. You're not willing to put forward a single benefit -- I'm not even talking about the people that are 60, let alone 65 or 70. I'm talking about people under 55. You're not willing to say there's a single benefit eligibility for Medicare, Medicaid or Social Security that you're willing to say, yeah, I would cut that?"

Fiorina: "What I think we need to do to engage the American people in a conversation about entitlement reform is to have a bipartisan group of people to come together and put every solution



Share this story:

[Recommend](#)

Barbara Boxer attacks Carly Fiorina as "too extreme" in the California Senate race.



About this statement:

Published: Friday, October 22nd, 2010 at 4:39 p.m.

Subjects: [Federal Budget](#), [Medicare](#), [Social Security](#)

Sources:

Barbara Boxer campaign, [Carly Fiorina: "Out of Touch,"](#) Oct. 15, 2010

Carly Fiorina campaign, [Fiorina Campaign Calls On Barbara Boxer To Remove False Advertisement and Apologize,](#) Oct. 15, 2010

Fox News Sunday, [Chris Wallace interviews Carly Fiorina,](#) Oct. 17, 2010

Frum Forum, [Fiorina: I Can Save Taxpayers a Half Trillion Dollars,](#) Feb. 25, 2010

The Heritage Foundation, [50 Examples of Government Waste,](#) Oct. 6, 2009

The Cato Institute, [Cutting Federal Spending,](#) 2009

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, [So-Called "Price Indexing" Proposal Would Result In Deep Reductions Over Time In Social Security Benefits,](#) Jan. 28, 2005

The Los Angeles Times, [Fiorina calls for lowering government spending,](#) Sept. 27, 2010

Written by: [Angie Drobnic Holan](#)
Researched by: [Angie Drobnic Holan](#)
Edited by: [Morris Kennedy](#)

How to contact us:

We want to hear your suggestions and comments. For tips or comments on our campaign promise database, please [e-mail the Obameter](#). If you are commenting on a specific promise, please include the promise number. For comments about our Truth-O-Meter or Flip-O-Meter items, please [e-mail the Truth-O-Meter](#). We're especially interested in seeing any chain e-mails you receive that you would like us to check out. If you send us a comment, we'll assume you don't mind us publishing it unless you tell us otherwise.

Browse the The Truth-O-Meter™:

on the table, every alternative on the table. And then we ought to engage in a long conversation with the American people so they understand the choices, instead of rushing off into a closed room and having 100 senators figure it out for themselves. We need to engage the American people in the conversation and I'm willing to consider any alternative. But we cannot continue to just jump over the fact that our government is bloated, wasteful, inefficient, in many cases inept, and frankly, in many cases as well, corrupt."

We would say that Fiorina doesn't really have a position on cutting entitlements, but the Boxer campaign pointed us to a few comments Fiorina has made [praising plans](#) promoted by the conservative think tanks The Heritage Foundation and the Cato Institute. The Boxer campaign also points out that Fiorina says she wants to cap federal spending at 20 percent of the gross domestic product -- which Boxer's people said necessarily means "slashing Medicare and Social Security." Because Social Security and Medicare are such large parts of the federal budget, they say, it's impossible to achieve spending cuts of that magnitude without cutting the programs, which make up a significant part of the federal budget.

Fiorina has said that entitlements need to be dealt with in a comprehensive manner. "I'm prepared to look at any and all ideas without stating at this point which I would favor and which I would not. We have to have a comprehensive look at entitlement reform, including Social Security reform," she told the *Los Angeles Times*.

We certainly don't like it when candidates refuse to give specifics about their plans. Fiorina has indicated she would accept some form of cuts to Social Security and Medicare for younger workers, but time and again she has refused to be specific, and only speaks about curtailing future spending for the programs in vague generalities. Still, that does not give the Boxer campaign the right to fill in the blanks. We do know that Fiorina supports slowing the growth of such programs to rein in government spending, but we don't know what specific proposals would look like, and whether they would constitute "slashing." And for this reason, we rate Boxer's statement Barely True.

- [Barack Obama's file](#)
- [Joe Biden's file](#)
- [Pants-On-Fire rulings](#)
- [By our rulings](#)
- [By subject](#)
- [By person](#)
- [NPR/PolitiFact Message Machine](#)
- [ABC News "This Week"](#)

Browse The Obameter:

- [All promises Not Yet Rated](#)
- [All promises In the Works](#)
- [All promises Stalled](#)
- [Broken promises](#)
- [Compromises](#)
- [Promises kept](#)
- [By subject](#)

Subscribe:

Keep up to date with Politifact:

- [Sign up for our e-mail](#) (about once a week)
- Put [a free PolitiFact widget](#) on your blog or Web page
- [Subscribe to our RSS feeds](#)
- [Follow us on Twitter](#)
- [Fan us on Facebook](#)



© 2010 · All Rights Reserved · St. Petersburg Times
 490 First Avenue South · St. Petersburg, FL 33701 · 727-893-8111
[About PolitiFact](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Advertise](#)
[Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms, Conditions & Copyright](#)