

[Jagadeesh Gokhale: Social Security Advisory Board Member for Privatization \(Plus: Does Astrue Want SS Chief Actuary Fired?\)](#)

8:44 am in [Uncategorized](#) by [Doug Martin](#)

With the deficit hawks buzzing in Washington, it's important we keep an eye on Jagadeesh Gokhale, who Mitch McConnell named to the [Social Security Advisory Board](#) in November 2009. Gokhale, a frequent contributor to the *Financial Times* and the *Washington Post*, opposed Obama's 2009 stimulus, [claiming](#) it would lead us back to housing bubble spending levels. For the past year, he's been yelling that Obama cannot win arguments against ["God and mathematics,"](#) since Social Security will run out of money much quicker than the government believes it will.

A writer for the American Enterprise Institute and a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, Gokhale has [called for](#) the privatization of Social Security since 1997, at least, and he has hunted for years. He consulted for the U.S. Department of Treasury in 2002 and is former senior economic advisor at the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland.

In his new University of Chicago Press released book *Social Security: A Fresh Look at Policy Alternatives* (which he [debuted](#) on Capitol Hill last month), Gokhale claims that due to the loss of jobs that require low skills, pay to laborers will decrease in the future and require more people to be supported by social programs. These highly-funded social programs will ["further weaken incentives for the young to acquire skills, further erode the tax base, which in turn will promote the further 'strengthening' of social insurance protections ... and so on."](#) Instead of calling for higher taxes on the rich and for the corporations to pay higher wages, Gokhale (like a pseudo-economist and true politician) blames the workers and sees privatization as Social Security's savior, even though he claims to present other alternatives.

Although most online reviews of his book are either from the Cato Institute or written by Gokhale himself, Eric Laursen (who pointed out to *Firedoglake* readers the Catfood Commission's plan for a [video-game](#)) outlines Gokhale's work with the Bush administration and how Gokhale's doomsday numbers on the Social Security "crisis" do not add up. Laursen, in the wonderfully titled "Cato Premieres Its Latest Horror Show," shows why Gokhale's numbers deceptively look scary, ["but awfully hollow, too."](#) If Gokhale's theories sound phony, we must realize that he also [says](#) that privatization would benefit the poor.

Gokhale and the Social Security Advisory Board's influence on the Debt Commission is unknown, but their job is supposedly to advise the president, Congress, and the Social Security commissioner, the Bush-appointed Michael J. Astrue, presumably with the trustees' report. Interestingly, Robert Weiner (former chief of staff of the House Select Committee on Aging) [questions](#) the delay in the [The Social Security Trustees' Annual Report](#), which was last slated for release on June 30. The trustees [are](#) Astrue, Geithner,

Sebelius, and Solis. Stephen Goss, as chief actuary, also helps write the report, but as the *New York Times* points [out](#) today, Astrue and Goss have been at odds over Social Security for years now. In fact, several Democratic lawmakers (among them Max Baucus and Earl Pomeroy) recently have written to the administration or spoken in interviews, fearing that Astrue is calling on Obama to axe or demote Goss, whose job it is to give a non-political analysis of the Social Security situation, one which probably wouldn't look as dire as the Debt Commission wants it to.