

Resource 4 (2 of 2)**Individual Responsibility, Social Responsibility, and Social Security**

Teacher's Guide

Use the handout “Presidential Viewpoints on Social Security” to answer the following questions. For each question, provide a relevant section from the reading, along with an explanation of that section in your own words. Important: *There will be multiple (and often conflicting) answers for each question.*

- ▶ What is the purpose of Social Security?

Students' answers could include the following:

- *To be a supplement to people's incomes, not a welfare plan (George H. W. Bush)*
- *Not a welfare program; allows seniors greater dignity and the ability to maintain a middle-class standard of living (William J. Clinton)*
- *To provide young Americans with ownership, access to wealth, and independence (George W. Bush)*
- *Not an individual account, but an intergenerational commitment to provide for one's retirement (Barack H. Obama)*

- ▶ Is Social Security reform necessary? Why or why not?

Students' answers could include the following:

- *No. It will be solvent until 2030 and should be fixed then. (George H. W. Bush)*
- *Yes, but it is currently working so we should be very careful about the changes that we suggest. (William J. Clinton)*
- *Yes, private accounts should be allowed so workers can earn a return on their investment greater than 2%. (George W. Bush)*
- *Yes, but not an individual account; the next generation will pay for the current generation of workers. (Barack H. Obama)*

- ▶ Whose responsibility is it to provide for the nation's elderly?

Students' answers could include the following:

- *It is the individual citizen's responsibility, with the help of government supplements in the form of Social Security payments. (George H. W. Bush)*
- *It is the responsibility of the American people, through payments into Social Security. (William J. Clinton)*
- *People should provide for themselves through investments and planning, and Social Security should be structured in such a way as to promote this. (George W. Bush)*
- *The younger generation pays for the retirement of the elderly, and will have their own retirement paid for by the next generation. (Barack H. Obama)*