

SENATOR HARRIS: With their social security benefits, combined with their benefits from the retirement system, they are below \$4,000 a year on the average.

SENATOR SMITH: Okay, so that is actually considered to be below poverty?

SENATOR HARRIS: Below poverty level, yes.

SENATOR SMITH: Okay, then that makes them eligible for other kinds of benefits...assistance programs. Okay. My concern is that other than the other things that people have been saying here that if we give them this increase then what would you think this would bring them up to, by the way? Do you have a figure?

SENATOR HARRIS: It would help. It would help.

SENATOR SMITH: But you don't know what that would be?

SENATOR HARRIS: Right offhand I don't know what the total figure would be, but it would help them somewhat. It is not the total answer because, obviously, they still have a problem. It is just trying to address the problem in some way.

SENATOR SMITH: Okay, my concern is I worked with aging programs for nearly eight years, and I'm aware of a lot of elderly people out there that are, what we call, the group that falls between the cracks, those people that are just above the income guidelines to receive benefits or assistance, and am more concerned that you may be placing them in a position where they will actually be receiving less assistance if we pass this because they won't be eligible for other kinds of things then, if they fall above that guideline.

SENATOR HARRIS: Because of the special situation with the Depression years taken into account, when their salaries were decreased, these people just can't reach that problem level unless they have other income that they have coming in.

SENATOR SMITH: That's not what I'm...I'm not...see, I'm trying to tell you that it could be possible that we may be creating a bigger problem for them by doing this for them