

Debating Economic Security

Compare party and interest group views on Social Security during the Great Depression.

8.21.A "identify different points of view of political parties and interest groups on important historical issues;"

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each political party or interest group named in the passage. Write 1, 2, or 3 beside each one to show whether it supported the law, wanted a different stronger plan, or opposed the law's approach.

The Social Security Debate

- ① During the Great Depression, millions of Americans lost jobs and savings. In 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt asked Congress to pass the Social Security Act. The law created old-age benefits for many retired workers and unemployment insurance paid through payroll taxes. Leaders debated whether the federal government should take this larger role. The issue divided political parties and brought organized interest groups into the debate. Their statements showed different ideas about responsibility, taxes, and economic security.
- ② Roosevelt's Democratic Party supported Social Security. Roosevelt argued that workers deserved protection from poverty when jobs disappeared or retirement came. Many Democrats in Congress backed the bill, although some members disagreed with parts of it. The Townsend movement, organized through Townsend Clubs, was an interest group that also wanted stronger old-age support. It proposed monthly pensions of \$200 for people age sixty and older, paid for by a national sales tax. Thus, Democrats and Townsend supporters shared concern about economic security, but favored different plans.
- ③ The Republican Party criticized the Social Security Act in its 1936 platform, calling it unsound and warning about its tax burden. Republican leaders favored helping people in need but objected to this federal program's design. The American Liberty League, an interest group funded by business leaders and joined by conservative Democrats, opposed many New Deal programs. It argued that expanded federal power threatened individual liberty and property rights. These opponents differed from Democratic supporters and Townsend Clubs because they questioned the law's approach, not the need for economic stability.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What point of view did Roosevelt's Democratic Party take on Social Security? Give one reason its leaders supported that view.

2 How did the Townsend movement's plan for old-age support differ from the Democratic Party's Social Security plan?

3 What was the Republican Party's point of view on the Social Security Act, and what concern did it give?

4 How was the American Liberty League's point of view similar to, and different from, the Republican Party's point of view?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write four sentences comparing the point of view of one political party and one interest group from the passage. Name both organizations, state each view, include one reason or proposal, and explain one important difference between them.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each political party or interest group named in the passage. Write 1, 2, or 3 beside each one to show whether it supported the law, wanted a different stronger plan, or opposed the law's approach. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What point of view did Roosevelt's Democratic Party take on Social Security? Give one reason its leaders supported that view.	Roosevelt's Democratic Party supported Social Security because its leaders believed workers needed protection from poverty during unemployment and retirement.
2	How did the Townsend movement's plan for old-age support differ from the Democratic Party's Social Security plan?	Both supported economic security for older people, but the Townsend movement proposed \$200 monthly pensions for people age sixty and older, funded by a national sales tax. Democrats supported Social Security's system of old-age benefits and payroll taxes.
3	What was the Republican Party's point of view on the Social Security Act, and what concern did it give?	The Republican Party criticized the act and objected to its design. It called the program unsound and warned about its tax burden.
4	How was the American Liberty League's point of view similar to, and different from, the Republican Party's point of view?	Both opposed the Social Security Act's approach. Republicans focused on the program's design and tax burden, while the American Liberty League argued that expanded federal power threatened individual liberty and property rights.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Roosevelt's Democratic Party and the American Liberty League had opposing viewpoints on Social Security. Democrats supported federal protection for workers facing unemployment or retirement. The Liberty League opposed expanded federal power because it believed liberty and property rights were at risk. Their disagreement shows different beliefs about what the federal government should do during an economic crisis.

Accept accurate comparisons that identify a political party and an interest group, state each viewpoint, and use a detail from the passage. Students may describe the Townsend movement as supporting a different, stronger old-age pension plan rather than simply supporting or opposing Social Security.