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August 24, 2010

Dear President Obama,

We were astonished and offended to find the attached email in our inbox this morning. Given Senator Simpson's clear disrespect for Social Security, the American people, and his degrading, sexist, ageist and profane language, The Older Women's League demands his resignation from the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform.

The Older Women's League (OWL) has represented the interests of low-income women 40 and older for thirty years, and we continue to be a voice for women. As such, Ashley Carson, OWL Executive Director, presented testimony before Mr. Simpson, Mr. Erskine Bowles, Commission Co-Chair, and Dr. Alice Rivlin, Commission Appointee on June 30, 2010. The facts speak for themselves, but Mr. Simpson suggests that anyone supporting people who most need help and who deserve the benefits they paid for must be dishonest or stupid. Such open contempt goes beyond the pale and cannot be tolerated from someone in such a position of authority.

OWL maintains its commitment to protect and strengthen Social Security for older women through its Social Security Matters campaign (www.socialsecuirymatters.org), which has been working to prevent benefit cuts, including raising the retirement age, and privatization since 2005.

OWL also works in coalition with many other campaigns to prevent misleading and false attacks on this critical program. Women, who earn less on average for the same work as men, are hit again upon taking Social Security benefits; due to lower lifetime earnings, women receive on average less than \$12,000 per year in Social Security benefits, while men receive nearly \$14,000.

Further, women are not living longer in retirement (low-income minority women have seen *decreases* in life expectancy), and cannot continue to work more years in physically difficult or demanding jobs. Social Security is not an overly generous program helping all seniors live out luxurious retirements. Social Security provides a base level of replacement income for older Americans who can no longer work, and any cuts to benefits, either in the form of smaller checks or by raising the retirement age, will hurt all generations, forcing more and more Americans back into poverty.

It may be good politics to have such an enemy to play off of heading into November, but Mr. President, it is time for you to stand up for the millions of American workers who have paid into Social Security on the promise of a secure retirement, and put them ahead of political sportsmanship. Mr. Simpson must be removed from this commission, either by his own will, or by yours. Show American workers you mean what you say about protecting Social Security. This is your chance.

Sincerely,

Donna L. Wagner
President, OWL

Ashley B. Carson
Executive Director, OWL