

**Title:**

**Hon.& Member's Official Name:**

Hon. J. French Hill

**Full Name of Congressional State:**

Arkansas

**Current Date:**

Thursday, September 21, 2023

**Member's Name as it Appears in Official Record:**

Mr. Hill

**\*\*Type Extension to Remarks below, the space allotted will expand as you type\*\***

I come before members of the House Committee on Ways and Means today to advocate for my soon-to-be-introduced bill, the Social Security Disability Insurance Return to Work Act.

This is legislation that I have introduced in the past four Congresses, alongside my fellow Arkansan Senator Tom Cotton, to strengthen SSDI and keep it solvent for current and future generations.

SSDI is critical to a state like Arkansas, where more than 130,000 of our state's population receive benefits through the program.

That is about 7.5% of all Arkansans in the state who rely on the program, many of whom are truly permanently disabled and unable to work.

But nationally, the number of recipients receiving SSDI payments has grown from 2.7 million in 1970 to 8.8 million in 2022 – just over 2.5% of the U.S. population.

Over that same period, spending on SSDI has grown from \$3 billion to over \$143 billion annually, meaning that the monthly payments recipients are receiving has nearly doubled, even when accounting for inflation.

My bill aims to strengthen SSDI and ensure the program remains viable to support future generations for citizens that truly require the assistance.

In 2021, fewer than 66,000 total beneficiaries left the program because they found gainful employment that disqualified them from receiving any benefits. That represents just 0.7% of the 8.8 million SSDI recipients.

Each American has the capacity to contribute productively to their community and our economy.

We must work with both employers and employees to encourage capable beneficiaries to leave the program and return to the workforce.

SSDI should be crafted to reflect short-term and long-term approaches to assistance, like private approaches to disability insurance.

Those who do regain their independence and experience more fulfillment in their lives as well as improved health.

My bill is straightforward. It creates classifications to assess a beneficiary's need to continue to receiving benefits and increases continuing disability assessments, notifies recipients about the Ticket to Work program when they first receive their benefits and then every six months afterwards, and amends the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) to include qualified SSDI beneficiaries.

By creating reasonable timelines for those expected to improve and incentivizing them to return to the workforce, SSDI can continue to serve as a temporary reprieve for those with work-prohibitive disabilities, allow beneficiaries to earn more income, and facilitate a return to the workforce for millions of disabled Americans.

I am committed to protecting SSDI for those who remain unable to work and supporting those who show improvements as they continue striving for greater freedom and opportunity.

With Congress finally demonstrating its commitment to ending extraordinarily high budget deficits, we will be forced to take thoughtful looks at how we spend our taxpayer dollars, evaluating which programs work and are worth their investment, and thinking about how critical safety nets can be improved and operate more efficiently.

Congress has long abdicated its oversight and authority on our social safety. This must change.

I hope that this committee will consider these reforms to the SSDI program as we consider ways to improve the impact of the federal government's contributions and fulfill our promises to help our country's most vulnerable citizens.

**\*\*The entries below are optional – use only if you are inserting a quoted source\*\***  
**\*\*Type quoted SOURCE TITLE below\*\***

**\*\*Type quoted SOURCE AUTHOR below\*\***

**\*\*Insert or Type the SOURCE TEXT below\*\***

**Affix MEMBER'S SIGNATURE below**

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "French Hill". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "F".