

# ***ADVISORY***

## **FROM THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS SUBCOMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SECURITY**

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### **Chairman Johnson Announces Hearing on the Challenges Facing the Next Commissioner of Social Security**

U.S. Congressman Sam Johnson (R-TX), Chairman of the House Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Social Security, today announced a hearing on the challenges facing the next Commissioner of Social Security. **The hearing will take place on Friday, April 26, 2013, in B-318 Rayburn House Office Building, beginning at 9:30 a.m.**

In view of the limited time available to hear witnesses, oral testimony at this hearing will be from invited witnesses only. However, any individual or organization not scheduled for an oral appearance may submit a written statement for consideration by the Subcommittee and for inclusion in the printed record of the hearing.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Social Security Administration (SSA) is responsible for delivering services that impact the lives of nearly every American. In fiscal year 2012, the SSA paid over 65 million people a total of more than \$800 billion in retirement, survivors, disability, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. During the same year, the SSA processed over 5 million retirement and survivor applications and 3.2 million disability applications, posted 245 million earnings items to workers' records, assisted nearly 45 million visitors at their local offices, and completed more than 56 million transactions on their National 800 number. In addition to serving the public, the SSA completed 443,000 medical continuing disability reviews and 2.6 million SSI redeterminations as part of its program integrity work.

As the nation ages, the SSA will continue to face unprecedented service delivery demands even as it moves to automate many of its core functions. With Congress and the President agreeing on nearly static annual SSA budgets for the last three years, along with tight budgetary caps for future federal agency spending, the SSA has reached a crossroad in terms of how it will continue to deliver services to the public in a constrained fiscal environment.

In response, the SSA is already operating under a self-imposed hiring freeze for the last 2.5 years and has reduced the hours its offices are open to the public. At the same time, the agency has significantly increased online services, where today 45 percent of retirement applications and 33 percent of disability applications are being filed on line.

In March 2011, the Social Security Advisory Board (SSAB) issued a report, *“A Vision of the Future for the Social Security Administration”* criticizing the lack of strategic planning by SSA. To meet its mission, the SSAB urged the agency to prepare itself to manage its current and future mission-related objectives, including critical post-entitlement and program integrity activities, and efficiently use existing financial and other resources to balance its service delivery policies with its stewardship responsibilities.

The SSA will be led by a new Commissioner once the President chooses his nominee and the Senate completes its confirmation process. Former Commissioner Michael J. Astrue’s six-year term expired in January 2013. Carolyn Colvin, who served as the Deputy Commissioner, is currently serving as Acting Commissioner until a new Commissioner is confirmed.

In announcing the hearing, Social Security Subcommittee Chairman Sam Johnson (R-TX) said, **“Today, nearly 10,000 Americans sign up for retirement benefits every day. The recession coupled with a slow economic recovery has resulted in a wave of new disability claims, increased backlogs and growing wait times for a frustrated public. Moreover, the Disability Insurance program remains on the Government Accountability Office’s “High Risk” list. With ever increasing demands on Social Security, the time is now for bold and decisive leadership by the next Commissioner of Social Security. This hearing will lay the groundwork for the challenges facing the new Commissioner and strategies for how best to address them, in order to adequately meet the needs of the American people.”**

## **FOCUS OF THE HEARING**

The hearing will focus on the challenges facing the next Commissioner, including those related to service delivery capacity, human capital management, strategic planning, information technology, physical infrastructure and the agency’s ability to effectively administer Social Security programs.

## **DETAILS FOR SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN COMMENTS:**

Please Note: Any person(s) and/or organization(s) wishing to submit for the hearing record must follow the appropriate link on the hearing page of the Committee website and complete the informational forms. From the Committee homepage, <http://waysandmeans.house.gov>, select “Hearings.” Select the hearing for which you would like to submit, and click on the link entitled, “Click here to provide a submission for the record.” Once you have followed the online instructions, submit all requested information. ATTACH your submission as a Word or WordPerfect document, in compliance with the formatting requirements listed below, **by the**

**close of business on Friday, May 3, 2013.** Finally, please note that due to the change in House mail policy, the U.S. Capitol Police will refuse sealed-package deliveries to all House Office Buildings. For questions, or if you encounter technical problems, please call (202) 225-1721 or (202) 225-3625.

#### **FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS:**

The Committee relies on electronic submissions for printing the official hearing record. As always, submissions will be included in the record according to the discretion of the Committee. The Committee will not alter the content of your submission, but we reserve the right to format it according to our guidelines. Any submission provided to the Committee by a witness, any supplementary materials submitted for the printed record, and any written comments in response to a request for written comments must conform to the guidelines listed below. Any submission or supplementary item not in compliance with these guidelines will not be printed, but will be maintained in the Committee files for review and use by the Committee.

1. All submissions and supplementary materials must be provided in Word or WordPerfect format and **MUST NOT** exceed a total of 10 pages, including attachments. Witnesses and submitters are advised that the Committee relies on electronic submissions for printing the official hearing record.
2. Copies of whole documents submitted as exhibit material will not be accepted for printing. Instead, exhibit material should be referenced and quoted or paraphrased. All exhibit material not meeting these specifications will be maintained in the Committee files for review and use by the Committee.
3. All submissions must include a list of all clients, persons and/or organizations on whose behalf the witness appears. A supplemental sheet must accompany each submission listing the name, company, address, telephone, and fax numbers of each witness.

The Committee seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202-225-1721 or 202-226-3411 TTD/TTY in advance of the event (four business days' notice is requested). Questions with regard to special accommodation needs in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats) may be directed to the Committee as noted above.

Note: All Committee advisories and news releases are available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.waysandmeans.house.gov/>.