



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS  
WITH DISABILITIES**

**Social Security Task Force Annual Report for 2016  
December, 2016**

**2016 ACTIVITIES**

The Social Security Task Force continued its work on the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs on behalf of people with disabilities. Areas of focus during 2016 included the following:

- **Ensuring that proposed changes to the Social Security and SSI disability programs protect the rights and interests of people with disabilities.**

The Task Force advocated vigorously to ensure that proposed regulatory and other administrative policy changes to the Social Security disability determination and appeals process did not undercut the rights or ability of people with disabilities to access the income support benefits to which they are entitled. This included opposing proposed arbitrary deadlines for the submission of evidence without adequate due process protections, monitoring and pushing for improvements to the hearing backlog strategy contained in the CARES plan, supporting proposed expansions to acceptable sources for medical evidence in disability determinations and opposing proposed changes to the manner in which the Social Security Administration (SSA) weighs evidence (including the elimination of the treating physician rule) and whether and how Administrative Law Judges, articulate evidence is weighed and the rationale for doing so in their written decisions. All CCD letters and comments are available on the CCD website.

- **Monitoring Congressional action on SSDI and SSI and educating members of Congress on their staff on the importance of these programs to people with disabilities.**

Task Force Co-Chairs met with key Congressional staffers in the House and Senate and developed a number of fact sheets, response letters, Statements for the Record, and other documents in order to represent our positions. All documents are available on the CCD website. We also worked with other partners and coalitions.

- **Advocating that SSA has adequate resources for its administrative budget.**

Another major issue in 2016 continued to be the SSA's need for adequate funding to reduce the disability claims backlog of more than 1 million people waiting for hearings and prevent deterioration of other critical services primarily caused by the underfunding of SSA for many years. Efforts have already started in advocating for the SSA fiscal year (FY) 2018 budget.

- **Working to educate the public about the importance of Social Security benefits for people with disabilities and to ensure the solvency of the Social Security Trust Funds.**

The Task Force developed responses to the 2016 Social Security Trustees' Report.

- **Monitoring proposals on the SSI program.**

The Task Force continues to work with other disability advocates around the country to address criticisms of the program, usually focusing on the SSI childhood disability program, including the one contained in House Speaker Ryan's Better Way proposals. In addition, we support modernization of antiquated income and resource rules, such as contained in the SSI Restoration Act.

- **Monitoring proposals to promote employment and advocating to improve disability work incentives.**

The Task Force continued to advance its Social Security Disability Insurance Demonstrations Principles document, commented in support of improvements to the Expedited Reinstatement and Unsuccessful Work Attempt provisions, and monitored implementation of the Benefit Offset National Demonstration (BOND) and Promoting Opportunity Demonstration. The Task Force continued to coordinate its efforts with the CCD Employment and Training Task Force.

## **FUTURE ACTIVITIES**

The Task Force expects to continue to work on all of the issues described above. Specifically:

- Monitor proposed changes to the Social Security and SSI disability programs to ensure that the rights of people with disabilities are protected. We will continue to work with Members of Congress, other coalitions, and friendly media outlets, while countering attacks that are detrimental to people with disabilities.
- Continue to work regarding the solvency of the Social Security Trust Funds to ensure that the impact on people with disabilities is considered and their interests are protected.
- Advocate that SSA's administrative budget be adequately funded so that SSA has sufficient resources for personnel and service needs.
- Advocate for legislation, regulations, policy changes, and demonstration pilots to improve, simplify, and update the Social Security and SSI disability programs, including work incentives.
- Continue to work with other CCD Task Forces to monitor proposals to promote employment among disability beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries. In particular, we will seek to influence the development of proposals to ensure that they are directed toward maximizing employment opportunities while also doing no harm to existing critical income supports.
- Monitor the implementation of the disability programs in the Old Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance program and the SSI program; present testimony as requested to Congress; respond to notices of proposed rulemaking; and raise issues affecting people with disabilities to SSA officials and Congressional staff.

## **CO-CHAIRS IN 2016:**

Lisa Ekman, National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives

Kate Lang, Justice in Aging

Jeanne Morin, National Association of Disability Representatives

Web Phillips, National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare

T.J. Sutcliffe, The Arc of the United States