



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

**CCD Social Security Task Force Report
January 2012**

ISSUES/ACTIVITIES IN 2011

The Social Security Task Force continued its work on the Social Security and the Supplemental Security Income programs on behalf of people with disabilities.

Areas of focus during 2011 included the following highlights:

- **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.**

In late 2010, the Task Force was awarded a \$50,000 grant by the National Academy of Social Insurance and the Ford Foundation as part of a project to educate vulnerable populations who most rely on Social Security benefits. With this grant, we engaged in a public outreach and education campaign for people with disabilities. From December 2010 through April 2011, we held four policy briefings for CCD members and two webinars for groups outside Washington, DC. We also developed educational materials. The webinar PowerPoints and other educational materials are available on the website we created to address issues involving Social Security solvency and how they impact people with disabilities, www.disabilityandsocialsecurity.org.

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

A major issue in 2011 continued to be SSA's need for adequate funding to reduce the disability claims backlog and prevent deterioration of other critical services, primarily caused by the underfunding of SSA for many years. Significant efforts were taken to ensure that SSA received adequate funding for its FY 2012 administrative budget. Congressional hearings in the House and Senate highlighted the problem. In March 2011, the Task Force was invited to testify before the Senate Appropriations Labor-HHS Subcommittee. Efforts have already started for the SSA FY 2013 budget as the Task Force was involved in a September 2011 meeting with OMB.

- **Ensuring that proposed changes to the disability claims process protect the rights and interests of people with disabilities.**

The Social Security disability programs have come under increasing criticism in a series of articles and studies. The House Ways and Means Social Security Subcommittee has announced a series of hearings to address the future of the programs, with the first hearing held in December 2011. In response, the Task Force has been drafting "Disability Reform Principles" that can be the basis of statements, testimony, etc. on the issue. We hope to have the Principles finalized in early 2012.

The Task Force submitted comments regarding interim final rule that would ban individuals from Social Security offices. We have serious concerns about the interim final rule that we believe could

significantly impact the ability of people with disabilities to access the critical SSA services they rely upon. As a result, we urged SSA to reconsider the interim final rule.

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

We continue to coordinate efforts with the CCD Employment and Training Task Force. In his FY 2012 proposed budget, the President included a proposal for a pilot project that would simplify the work incentives program.

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

The SSI childhood disability program has come under attack following a series of newspaper articles and the Task Force has worked with other disability advocates around the country to address criticisms of the program. This has included a Senate staff briefing and follow-up to a House hearing.

- **Proactively meeting with Administration officials and Congressional staff on a broad range of topics affecting people with disabilities.**

We attended a meeting with White House staff in April 2011 regarding issues affecting people with disabilities. The GAO asked to meet with disability advocates regarding a report on a wide range of issues in the Social Security disability programs, both procedural and substantive. The meeting took place in June 2011.

GOALS FOR 2012

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

- Continuing 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.
- Advocating that SSA's administrative budget be adequately funded so that SSA has sufficient resources for personnel and service needs.
- Monitoring proposed changes to the disability claims process to ensure that the rights of people with disabilities are protected.
- Advocating for legislation, regulations, and policy changes to improve, simplify, and update the Social Security and SSI disability programs, including work incentives.
- Continuing 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 these proposals to ensure that they are directed toward maximizing employment opportunities while also doing no harm to existing critical income supports. The Statement of Principles that we wrote in 2008 will be used as the basis for our work.
- Monitoring the implementation of the disability programs in the Old Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance program and the SSI program; presenting testimony as requested to Congress; responding to notices of proposed rulemaking; and raising issues of concern to people with disabilities to SSA officials and Congressional staff.

CO-CHAIRS:

Marty Ford, The Arc of the United States

Susan Prokop, Paralyzed Veterans of America

Ethel Zelenske, National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives

January 2012