

CCD Social Security Task Force Report

January 2013

ISSUES/ACTIVITIES IN 2012

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 2012 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.**

The Task Force built on the 2011 activities funded by 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. 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. During budget discussions, it appeared that policymakers were considering a change to the Social Security cost-of-living-adjustment, from the CPI-W to the chained CPI. The Task Force drafted a CCD sign-on letter to the President and to all Members of Congress opposing the chained CPI. We also developed a Fact Sheet and drafted a blog post for the Huffington Post, which appeared under Donna Meltzer's name. We also raised our concerns at meetings with OMB staff and with staff for a number of Senators on the Senate Finance Committee

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

A major issue in 2012 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 2013 administrative budget. Congressional hearings in the House and Senate highlighted the problem. Efforts have already started for the SSA FY 2014 budget as the Task Force was involved in a September 2012 meeting with OMB.

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

Attacks on the Social Security disability programs have come under increasing criticism in a series of media articles and reports. In response, the Task Force finalized "Disability Reform Principles" to be the basis of statements, testimony, etc. on the issue. The House Ways and Means Social Security Subcommittee held a series of hearings to address the future of the disability programs, with the first hearing held in December 2011. The Task Force was asked to testify at two of the hearings in March 2012 and June 2012. In addition, we submitted Statements for the Record for the hearings in December 2011 and January 2012. We submitted letters to the editor in response to some articles, including a letter that appeared in the Washington Post under Donna Meltzer's name. We met with a friendly media organization late in the year to help with strategies. We also discussed concerns in meetings with Senate and House staff.

We asked for two meetings with White House to discuss Social Security and SSI issues affecting people with disabilities.

- **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 2013 proposed budget, the President included a proposal for a pilot project that would simplify the work incentives program. The Task Force supported this approach in a Statement for the Record for a March 2012 Senate HELP Committee Hearing on “Stay-at-Work and Back-to-Work Strategies: Lessons from the Private Sector.” The Task Force also coordinated a meeting with other interested CCD Task Forces to discuss a Senate HELP Committee Report issued in July 2012 and organized a follow-up meeting with HELP Committee staff.

- **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, including the development of a Fact Sheet on the importance of the SSI program to people with disabilities. We participated in Hill meetings with other advocates. The Task Force was invited to testify at a House Ways and Means Human Resources Subcommittee hearing in July 2012 on use of technology in SSI financial eligibility requirements. On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the SSI program, we wrote a blog post that appeared on the Huffington Post under Donna Meltzer’s name.

GOALS FOR 2013

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 and in 2012 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:

Jeanne Morin, National Association of Disability Representatives

TJ Sutcliffe, The Arc of the United States

Ethel Zelenske, National Organization of Social Security Claimants’ Representatives

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