



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

Social Security Task Force Annual Report for 2017 January 2018

2017 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 2017 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 advocacy to improve implementation of recent regulatory changes the Task Force opposed that created arbitrary deadlines for the submission of evidence without adequate due process protections and monitoring and pushing for improvements to the hearing backlog strategy contained in the CARES plan. The Task Force opposed program changes included in the President's Fiscal Year 2018 budget proposal. All CCD letters and comments are available on the CCD website.

- **Monitoring Congressional action on SSDI and SSI and educating members of Congress and 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, and other documents in order to represent our positions. The Task Force was invited to testify at two House hearings in 2017 - one on improving the representative payee program and one on the disability hearings backlog. The Task Force developed recommendations to improve the representative payee program and issued a letter of support for H.R. 4547, the Strengthening Protections for Social Security Beneficiaries Act. We also worked with other partners and coalitions to oppose H.R. 2792, the Control Unlawful Fugitive Felons Act of 2017, which would deny SSI benefits to those with outstanding warrants. The bill passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 244-171 on September 28, 2017. All documents are available on the CCD website.

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

Another major issue in 2017 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) 2019 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 2017 Social Security Trustees' Report. The Task Force's efforts in 2017 also included responding to major press reports that painted an inaccurate picture of SSDI and SSI beneficiaries.

- **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. The Task Force also strongly opposed the proposal in the President's budget request to create sliding scale SSI benefits for multi recipient households. The Task Force Co-Chairs also visited with Hill staff and sent a letter to oppose H.R. 2792, the Controlling Unlawful Fugitive Felons 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 and monitored implementation of the Benefit Offset National Demonstration (BOND), the PROMISE initiative, Promoting Opportunity Demonstration and other demonstrations. The Task Force continued to coordinate its efforts with the CCD Employment and Training Task Force, including sending appropriators a letter of support for Ticket to Work program.

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 2017:

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