



CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES

Social Security Task Force Annual Report for 2013

2013 ACTIVITIES

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 2013 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 spent much of the year countering attacks on the Social Security disability programs by Congressional oversight committees and media outlets including a series on NPR and a feature on CBS's *Sixty Minutes*. In response, the Task Force met with key Congressional staffers in the House and Senate and developed a number of fact sheets and other documents in order to set the record straight, which are available on the CCD website. We also successfully developed media contacts to counter the unfavorable coverage and submitted various letters, letters to the editor, and blog posts.

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

Another major issue in 2013 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. Efforts have already started for the SSA FY 2015 budget as the Task Force was involved in a September 2013 meeting with OMB.

We also asked for a meeting with the 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.**

A March 2013 forum organized by the Social Security Advisory Board (SSAB) addressed issues regarding the growth of the Social Security disability program and ways to reduce the rolls. Most of the speakers were very critical of the program and presented proposals that the Task Force believes would be detrimental to disability applicants and beneficiaries. We worked closely with one speaker, Professor Peter Blank, of the Burton Blatt Institute at the Syracuse University School of Law, whose presentation was consistent with principles and positions of the Task Force. Further, the Task Force developed lengthy comments that were presented to the SSAB after the forum.

The Task Force has a working group whose focus is on developing demonstration proposals for the agency that are consistent with positions taken by the Task Force over the years.

We continue to coordinate efforts with the CCD Employment and Training Task Force.

- **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.**

Use of the “chained CPI” continues to arise in Congressional and Administration discussions. The Task Force has continued to develop responses when necessary, voicing its opposition to the chained CPI as it would be detrimental to Social Security and SSI beneficiaries with disabilities. We also developed responses to the 2013 Social Security Trustees’ Report. All documents are available on the CCD website. We also continue to support reallocation in order to maintain the solvency of the Disability Insurance Trust Fund.

- **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.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

The Task Force expects to continue to work on all of the issues described above. At the end of 2013, the Task Force was honored to receive a grant from AARP to support our future activities. In particular, we expect the attacks on the disability programs to continue and that Congress may propose “reforms” that will require close scrutiny regarding their impact on people with disabilities. 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 2013:

Jeanne Morin, National Association of Disability Representatives

TJ Sutcliffe, The Arc of the United States

Rebecca Vallas, National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives

Ethel Zelenske, National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives