



February 27, 2017

United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative:

Social Security Works strongly encourages you to sign Representative Al Lawson's (FL-5) and Representative Darren Soto's (FL-9) letter urging President Trump to exempt the Social Security Administration from the federal government hiring freeze. Not only have the costs of administering Social Security already been pre-funded, the work of the Social Security Administration is vitally important to virtually all Americans. Allowing the Social Security Administration to begin hiring will demonstrate the bipartisan commitment to ensuring that Americans receive from their government the world-class service they have earned, deserve, and have paid for.

Our Social Security system provides modest but essential economic support when wages are lost as the result of death, serious and permanent disability, or old age. Americans pay for this insurance protection with premiums, better known as the Federal Insurance Contribution Act (FICA) payments. Less than a penny of each dollar spent goes toward administering Social Security. In the same way Social Security benefits are earned, workers are already paying for high quality services from the Social Security Administration with their work and contributions, as well.

Social Security is totally self-financing, has no borrowing authority, and can only pay benefits if it has sufficient revenue not only to cover those costs, but also all related administrative costs – including the compensation of those federal workers who administer Social Security. As a consequence, Social Security does not add a penny to the federal deficit or debt. Indeed, it currently has an accumulated surplus of over \$2.8 trillion, and growing. According to the most recent Trustees Report, Social Security is projected to run a surplus of \$31.1 billion in calendar year 2017.

Thousands of American workers are turning 65 every day and this means the Social Security Administration is more important than ever. On average, over 161,000 Americans visit SSA's 1,200 field offices each day, and the agency receives roughly 20 million calls from its customers each year. Despite its growing and important work load, the Social Security Administration has, in recent years, been drastically limited by Congress in how much of its surplus it can spend for administration. Even while the number of Americans receiving Social Security has increased by 13 percent over the past 6 years, the Social Security Administration's budget has actually shrunk by 10 percent, after inflation.

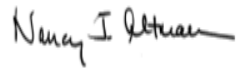
The inadequate funding has limited the hours of field offices and resulted in the closing of 64 field office just since 2011. Even more distressingly, SSA's disability appeals backlog has climbed to a record high of over 1.1 million pending cases. Given that the average processing time for a

disability hearing is roughly 16 months before an application is approved or rejected, this backlog is especially harmful to workers with disabilities and their families.

The hiring freeze will make the backlogs even longer and the ability to get the people's work done even harder. Surveys show that 61 percent of people want to be able to call or visit a local office when it is time for them to apply for retirement benefits, and an overwhelming 86 percent of Americans want more or the same number of local field offices in the future. Please sign the Lawson-Soto letter now being circulated so that the services that the American people have paid for and deserve will not be undercut by the Administration's hiring freeze.

Thank you for your support on this matter. To sign the letter please contact Adam.LaRose@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy J. Altman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

Nancy J. Altman
Founding Co-Director, Social Security Works