

LCAO Income Security Committee Meeting Minutes

November 29, 2017 at 2:30 pm

WeWork, 1440 G Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005

Conference Room 8A

Call-In #: 641-715-3200 p/w: 635743#

1. Happenings at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB).
 - a. Recent confusion over who will lead the agency has not been solved.
 - b. Delaying of the Fiduciary Rule until July 2019
 - c. Discussion over what LCAO's roll can be going forward, defending the work of CFPB, particularly its protections of older adults.
 - i. Plans were made to contact someone in the Office of Older Americans to see if they can speak to the committee in December.
2. SNAP Simplification for the Elderly Act: Adam LaRose, Presidential Management Fellow, Office of Congressman Al Lawson
 - a. Worked hand in hand with folks at CBPP to develop the bill and a handful of LCAO organizations have already been supportive.
 - b. The bill will likely be introduced later this week.
 - c. There are three main provisions to the bill.
 - i. Building upon the success of USDA's Elderly Simplified Application Project
 1. Extends SNAP (re)certification periods for households from 12 to 36 months if all adult household members are elderly, disabled, or enrolled in Medicaid or the Medicare Savings Program.
 - a. This is in response to under-enrollment of seniors in SNAP as well as the largely unchanging incomes of low-income older adults' year-to-year.
 - ii. Amending existing law to allow the Secretary of Agriculture and the Commissioner of Social Security (SSA) to administer 'Combined Application Projects' in at least 10 additional states
 1. This will streamline application procedures for SSI and SNAP.
 - iii. Creating 'Social Security Administration Senior Centers' as pilot projects in 10 SSA field offices that serve high-poverty areas,
 1. Develop and test approaches to integrated application and delivery of federal, state, and local entitlement and welfare programs for low-income elderly or disabled individuals.
3. Stacy Braverman Cloyd, Deputy Director of Government Affairs, National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives (NOSSCR)
 - a. Social Security Administration FY18 Funding
 - i. Senate proposed a \$492 million cut in Social Security Administration Operations and Public Services in an omnibus appropriations bill.
 - ii. Meanwhile, the House has proposed flat funding for SSA.
 1. SSA building rents, utilities, and other fixed costs increase by about \$350 million every year.

- iii. Most of SSA's administrative funds come out of the Social Security Trust fund. Congress can put a ceiling on what SSA can spend though many think this amount should not be subject to Appropriations.
 - iv. 1.3% of benefits paid out are used to administer SSA.
 - 1. Though its efficiency is unprecedented, compared to any other industry, it is simply not enough.
- b. Limitation on Administrative Expenses (LAE)
 - i. The appropriation for SSA's LAE makes up most of the costs needed to administer the agency.
 - ii. As the number of beneficiaries increases and LAE does not, the amount of funding utilized to administer SSA may have to decrease even more.
 - iii. Flat funding is also hurts SSA's ability to function properly.
 - 1. Flat funding could lead to a hiring freeze, longer wait times for appointments and walk-ins, increased processing times for disability claims, longer wait times and more busy signals on 800 number, and limits on the number of Continuing Disability Reviews that can be performed.
- c. What happened in FY17?
 - i. The situation has gotten worse despite the number of SSA beneficiaries continuing to rise. There have been tangible and real outcomes from a lack of sufficient funding.
 - 1. Increases in wait time on 800 phone number and in field offices.
 - 2. Field offices have closed and those that are open have shorter hours
 - 3. Reduction in sending out Social Security statements
 - 4. IT is severely outdated (though, there is only a certain amount of improvement that can be made with technology and many claims still benefit from face-to-face interaction).
 - 5. Hiring freeze has ensured staff is low
 - 6. \$90 million anomaly for reduction of disability hearing backlog
 - 7. Decrease in disability applications, something that is mostly unexplained.
 - 8. Average wait times for disability claims reached 633 days
 - 9. 10,002 people died waiting to hear about their disability claim
- d. What would a \$400 million cut, like the one in the Senate appropriations bill, do to SSA's operations?
 - i. Services will continue to decline
 - ii. Difficult to pinpoint what would be felt most since money can be prioritized differently.
 - iii. Using budget briefing materials from SSA for FY17, and increasing cost by at least \$350 million, the current Senate proposal make furloughs a definite possibility.

1. SSA said at a January 2017 budget briefing “For each furlough day (i.e., \$25 million cut), we cannot handle the following work:
 - a. 171,000 visitors to our field offices;
 - b. 150,000 National 800 Number calls;
 - c. 22,000 retirement and survivors claims;
 - d. 10,000 initial disability claims;
 - e. 2,500 disability reconsiderations;
 - f. 2,500 hearing decisions;
 - g. 3,400 full medical continuing disability reviews;
 - h. 11,000 SSI Redeterminations;
 - i. 11,000 overpayments collections;
 - j. 40,000 representative payee appointments;
 - k. 68,000 SSNs issued;
 - l. 1,000,000 annual earnings items posted;
 - m. 135,000 changes to beneficiary and recipient records, such as change of address; and
 - n. Other workloads for people on our rolls.
 - e. Restrictions on funds used for “program integrity” also plays a role in the predictions about sufficient funding.
 - i. Currently, 1 in every 7 dollars can be used for program integrity
 - ii. If the cut is made not just to “core” LAE, but made to total LAE paired with an increase in the amount reserved for program integrity, this would make the cut to “core” LAE even greater.
 - iii. Sen. Wyden has even proposed an amendment to consider more administrative responsibilities of SSA “program integrity.”
 - f. The uncertainty that lies ahead for SSA’s FY18 budget relies on:
 - i. LAE
 - ii. An FY18 anomaly (like the one done in FY17)
 - iii. Program Integrity fund restriction
4. SSA FY18 Appropriations Letter
- a. Jasmine shared the letter that was put together in response to the Senate’s proposal to cut \$492 million from SSA’s budget and asked for feedback and guidance on next moves to bring it to the full LCAO.
 - i. Marci was unsure if there was precedent for stating that SSA budget should not be subject to Appropriations, thereby competing with other important programs for older adults in the LaborHHS bill
 1. The group discussed if LCAO has a history weighing in on this and a plan was made to investigate previous budget letters on the subject.

Items of interest:

Stacy Cloyd, National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives (NOSSCR) presentation notes

SNAP Simplification for the Elderly Act bill summary

Rep. Lawson Dear Colleague: SNAP Simplification for the Elderly Act

In attendance:

Jasmine Jefferson, Social Security Works

Breana Clark, B'nai B'rith

Marci Phillips, NCOA

Evan Carmen, B'nai B'rith

Rachel Goldberg, AARP

Katie Smith, AFSCME