



# Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

*Katie Smith Sloan, Chair*

November 2, 2016

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health & Human Services, Education &  
Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health & Human Services, Education &  
Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health & Human Services, Education  
& Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health & Human Services, Education &  
Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Blount, Ranking Member Murray, Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations, I am writing regarding the Fiscal Year 2017 Labor-HHS Appropriations bill. We request that you seriously consider and support the President's request of \$13.067 billion for SSA Limitation on Administrative Expenses (LAE).

LCAO is a coalition of 72 national nonprofit organizations concerned with the well-being of America's older population. Our organizations know first-hand the effects the previous SSA administrative budget cuts have had on Social Security beneficiaries. Since 2010, the Social Security Administration's budget, after accounting for inflation, has been cut by 10%, while the number of beneficiaries have increased 12%. This has resulted in the closure of more than 60 field offices and more than 500 mobile offices. In 2015, more than half the applicants have had to wait more than 3 weeks for an appointment in a field office. In addition, 1.1 million people are waiting for disability appeals hearings, with an average wait time of over 500 days for their appeals to be heard.

2519 Conn Ave NW, Washington, DC 20008 ♦ (202)783-2242 ♦ (202)783-2255(Fax)  
Email: [LCAO@LeadingAge.org](mailto:LCAO@LeadingAge.org) ♦ Website: [www.LCAO.org](http://www.LCAO.org)

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The funding levels proposed for the Social Security Administration in the House and Senate bills are inadequate and as a result the agency risks failing seniors and disabled beneficiaries. Not only are seniors waiting too long to be served, but 8,000 disabled beneficiaries have died while waiting for their disability case to be adjudicated. This is unacceptable and suggests that it is time to revisit and revise the arbitrary caps on discretionary spending set into law in 2013.

Level funding or any reduction for SSA will further compromise Social Security's ability to support beneficiaries. There will be further delays in processing retiree benefits, increased wait times in field offices, increased backlogs of disability claims, reduced office hours for the public and additional delays on the national 800 number. In fact, if the House funding bill is approved, the Social Security Administration will have to institute staff furloughs of up to 2 weeks. During this time, Social Security offices will be closed and no retirement, survivors or disability application will be taken or processed. In addition, the agency will have to maintain the agency-wide hiring freeze and will not be able to replace staff vacancies.

While the Senate bill will not require furloughs, it would also have a serious impact on beneficiaries. For instance, the SSA will only be able to replace 1 of 2 vacancies in critical frontline and Disability Determination Service positions. Hiring of Administrative Law Judges and staff will also be curtailed. The agency may also need to reduce office hours and will have to suspend sending out the Social Security statements.

The Social Security Administration workforce is already spread thin and it cannot continue to absorb cuts without further impacting the public. The current CR made a .496% across-the-board cut for all agencies, which resulted in a \$60 million cut to Social Security from last year's level. If this were annualized it would provide SSA with \$11.959 billion for operational expenses. In anticipation of further cuts, the agency has instituted a hiring freeze, severely curtailed overtime, delayed purchases and canceled agency travel. Furthermore, the agency has approximately \$320 million in fixed annual inflationary costs that are earmarked for salaries, benefits, rent and guard costs which cannot be shifted to meet other needs. Level funding or less will further affect services, as well as the agency's program integrity work.

We respectfully ask that you fund SSA's Limitation on Administrative Expenses (LAE) at \$13.067 billion -- the level requested in the President's budget. Your support of this funding request will enable the Social Security Administration to provide the level of service the public expects and deserves.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Smith Sloan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Katie Smith Sloan  
Chair