



SOCIAL SECURITY

The Commissioner

March 8, 2004

The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Enclosed for consideration of the Congress is the Administration's draft bill to make an amendment to the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. The bill would temporarily extend the period of time-limited eligibility of refugees and asylees for SSI benefits. A description of the proposal is also enclosed with this letter. Enactment of the amendment would implement a proposal in the President's FY 2005 budget.

Under current law, aged, blind and disabled individuals who are admitted into the United States as refugees, asylees, and under several other immigration statuses may be eligible for SSI during a specific time period that begins upon their entry or their attaining an eligible immigration status. The current time period is 7 years. The Administration recognizes that some refugees and other individuals in the time-limited SSI eligibility category have been unable to obtain United States citizenship within this time period.

In order to address this situation, the proposal would temporarily extend the current 7-year time period to 8 years. The provision would remain in effect through fiscal year 2007.

The Office of Management and Budget has advised that there is no objection to the transmittal of this draft bill to the Congress, and its enactment would be in accord with the program of the President. We urge the Congress to give the draft bill prompt and favorable consideration.

I am sending an identical letter to the Honorable Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate.

Sincerely,

Jo Anne B. Barnhart

Enclosures



SOCIAL SECURITY

The Commissioner

March 8, 2004

The Honorable Richard B. Cheney
President of the Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

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Sincerely,

Jo Anne B. Barnhart

Enclosures

Temporary Expansion Of Length Of Time-Limited Eligibility Of Qualified Aliens For Supplemental Security Income Benefits

The bill would extend the time period for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) eligibility for a specified group of noncitizens who meet the legal test for eligibility based on age, blindness, or disability. This specified group includes refugees, asylees, Cuban/Haitian entrants, Amerasian immigrants, and noncitizens who have had their deportations withheld. These noncitizens may be currently eligible for SSI during the 7-year period following their entry into the United States or the date they obtain qualified status. After the 7-year period, they are no longer eligible for SSI unless they become United States citizens or adjust to an unlimited noncitizen eligibility category. The temporary extension to 8 years recognizes that some individuals may have been unable to obtain citizenship within the 7-year time period.

The provision would be effective October 1, 2004 for benefits payable for months in fiscal years 2005-2007. Individuals whose 7-year period expires prior to October 2004 would be eligible for benefits if they are in their eighth year after the effective date, but only for months after the effective date. The temporary extension would end for months after September 2007, and benefits would also end then for individuals in their eighth year.

A B I L L

To temporarily extend the period of time-limited eligibility of qualified aliens for supplemental security income benefits.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. TEMPORARY EXTENSION OF THE PERIOD OF TIME-LIMITED ELIGIBILITY OF QUALIFIED ALIENS FOR SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME BENEFITS.

(a) In General.--For the purpose of the application of section 402 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (8 U.S.C. 1612) to the program described in subsection (a) (3) (A) of such section during the period specified in subsection (b), the phrase "7 years" contained in subsection (a) (2) (A) of such section shall be deemed to read "8 years".

(b) Period Specified.--The period begins October 1, 2004, and ends September 30, 2007.

(c) Effective Date.--This section shall be effective with respect to benefits payable under the program described in section 402(a) (3) (A) of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 for months within the period specified in subsection (b).