



News Release

SOCIAL SECURITY

Commissioner Astrue Asks Governors to Exempt State Disability Determination Service Employees from Hiring Restrictions

Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security, in a letter today to Governor Edward G. Rendell, Chair of the National Governors Association, urged states to exempt their Disability Determination Services (DDSs) from hiring restrictions and furloughs. The DDSs are state agencies that make medical determinations for Social Security and Supplemental Security Income disability claims.

“I am compelled to write to you to express my grave concern over the hiring restrictions and furloughs that some states are employing,” Commissioner Astrue said. “Each month, SSA provides over \$11 billion in Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income benefits to more than 12.1 million citizens across the nation. We could not provide these vital benefits to some of the most vulnerable people in our society without the DDSs’ work.”

Social Security funds 100 percent of DDS employees’ salaries as well as overhead -- about \$2 billion nationwide this year. These funds cannot be used by the states for any other purpose, so states do not save money by cutting employees in DDSs – they only slow getting benefits to the disabled. Nevertheless, many governors are imposing across-the-board hiring freezes or furloughs that also affect DDS employees.

States receive significant benefits from the operation of the DDSs. The faster SSA approves claims for benefits, the sooner many disability applicants move from state to federal support. In addition, the salaries for DDS employees funded by SSA reduce unemployment levels in the states.

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