

## **Social Security Administration**

The Republican bill cuts funding for the Social Security Administration (SSA) by \$764 million (7%) below 2012, and \$1.08 billion (9%) below the 2013 requested level. These cuts are particularly reckless at a time when demand for services is rising and Social Security is essential to the financial security of countless Americans.

Staffing at SSA has already been cut. The Republican bill will reduce staffing by at least 2,400 at SSA and make employee furloughs likely. In FY 2011, SSA reduced staffing by more than 4,000. SSA expects to lose an additional 2,500 workers in 2012. At the funding level proposed in the Republican bill, the number of employees at SSA will be below the 2007 level. Despite having fewer employees, the demand for services since 2007 has increased dramatically; retirement and survivor claims will have increased by over 30 percent and disability claims will have increased by nearly 25 percent by 2013.

As a result, basic services—like processing applications, assisting individuals receiving Social Security, and providing timely responses to requests—will undoubtedly suffer. SSA has closed 11 offices in 2011 and plans to close 23 more in 2012. Additional offices would likely be closed under this budget proposal. Moreover, offices that remain open may have fewer staff to process claims and resolve problems or be open for fewer hours. The 800-number that acts as the primary access to SSA services for over 60 million people a year—will have increased waiting times because fewer people will be available to answer the calls.

Under this irresponsible Republican bill, individuals will likely see additional delays when applying for benefits under the Disability Insurance program. In past years, SSA has made progress in reducing the backlog of pending appeals of disability claims. Unfortunately, there is a growing backlog of new claims awaiting initial processing. Even at the Administration's requested funding level, this number is projected to rise from about 759,000 pending applications in 2011 to over 1.1 million in 2013. Under the Republican bill, the backlog will grow even faster. This imposes a serious hardship for the disabled, as they depend on these benefits to meet their most basic needs.

The Republican bill also underfunds SSA's commitment to detect fraud, waste and abuse. Fewer disability reviews and SSI redeterminations will be conducted, and SSA will be less confident that benefits will only be provided for those that are eligible. This represents a short-term saving that could lead to much higher long-term costs.

The draft report issued by the subcommittee provides no justification for, or plan to implement these cuts.