

Media Toolkits Talking Points

I am here on behalf of AFGE as a proud union member to tell the President, Republicans in Congress, and DOGE to keep their HANDS OFF Social Security.

IF NOTHING ELSE, MAKE THESE POINTS

- 87% of Americans agree that Social Security should remain a national priority.
- We are at a 50-year staffing low, all while adding 10,000 new beneficiaries every day. Every lost employee increases the system's risk of collapse.
- Closing field offices puts an undue burden on the most vulnerable Americans. The public deserves better.
- Congress and DOGE must stop the attacks on our workforce and focus on funding the operation of the Agency at 1.2% of benefit outlays.
- Americans suffer when our federal workforce suffers. Americans deserve better.
- SSA has already forced approximately 3,000 workers out the door as a result of buyout incentives, layoffs and terminations.
 - One-fourth of IT staff (330 workers) trained in managing anticipated COBOL computer systems were lost.

Mass reductions in staff – reducing the workforce to 50,000

- The Social Security Administration is at a 50-year staffing low, while serving 10,000 NEW beneficiaries daily.
- 30,000 Americans die each year waiting for benefit decisions.
 - This number will only increase as staffing levels decline.
- Social Security Administration staff is already stripped to the bone. Losing any more staff could have a disruptive effect on the provision of benefits.
 - Payments could be missed.
 - Americans could potentially wait hours or days on the National 1-800 number before reaching someone.

- Significant cuts to administrative staff could lead to more IT outages, ultimately disrupting frontline employees' jobs and potentially collapsing the system.

Office closures

- Currently, the Agency has about 1,200 field offices across the country, and DOGE had announced plans to close at least 47 Social Security offices.
- Office closures will reduce access and disrupt services.
 - Beneficiaries in rural areas could have to travel hundreds of miles to get to another office for service.
- Reducing office space does nothing but inhibit us from delivering Americans' earned benefits efficiently and accurately.
- In STATE, we have X offices with Y employees. When I started with the Agency, we had Z employees to serve the population of STATE.

Social Security is NOT a "Ponzi scheme"

- Social Security is a Social Contract. Not paying benefits owed and due would lead to breaking Social Security's sacred trust and its 90-year success story of never missing a payment.
- Social Security provides benefits to 73 million Americans.
- The Social Security Administration operates with less than 1% overhead, compared to 10% to 20% for private insurance.
- Anyone who receives a paycheck pays into the Social Security Trust Fund and the money is paid out when due.
- Social Security has a Board of Trustees and professional actuaries who report annually on the wellbeing of the Trust Fund.

Fraud within SSA

- The Inspector General's office that oversees SSA reported the number of improper payments made by the Social Security Administration is below 1%.

- The Inspector General has also noted that there are little to no dead people marked as alive in the Social Security database who are receiving benefits.
 - The claims of “dead” people receiving benefits is false and has been largely debunked.

Effect on payments

- The Social Security Administration has not missed a payment in nine decades.
- With a reduced workforce and number of offices, payments will be missed, denied or interrupted.
- Former Commissioner Martin O’Malley said he expects an understaffed system to collapse within the next 30 to 90 days, which would lead to an interruption of benefits.
- Millions of Americans rely on Social Security to afford basic needs such as food, clothing and housing. Without their earned benefits, people will go hungry, grow sicker, or even die.

The Agency could be run by AI/technology is the solution

- Most of the jobs within SSA cannot be ethically done by technology alone.
- Situations handled within SSA can be so nuanced that it takes empathy and human understanding to pull the right information and make decisions.
 - AI does not take emotions and human behavior into consideration, which can lead to incorrect denials or interruptions.
 - Our customers are often experiencing major life-changing events and have bought/paid for well-trained and compassionate employees to assist them in their time of need.
- I once served someone who *EXPLAIN SITUATION*. That could not have been handled by AI.

Sen. Blackburn and Sen. Lee eliminate federal unions bill

- Federal unions are effective watchdogs that protect the public’s interests.

- They are what stand between American's earned benefits and the forces that seek to undermine them.
- Federal unions protect the workers that serve the American public daily. The benefits that are negotiated through the union attract talented and qualified workers the Agency otherwise would not have.
- Diminishing federal unions would diminish their ability to serve Americans efficiently and accurately.

In person/Online ID requirements

- DOGE had indicated that they planned to close at least 50 field offices across the country. Elderly and disabled Americans could have to travel hundreds of miles to get to their closest office.
- The public will face limited parking, overcrowded waiting room space and inadequate security. Their time and safety are at risk.
- Americans will be subjected to longer wait times as an additional 75,000 – 85,000 people will have to visit field offices every week.

Return to Office and how it hurts productivity

- Forcing employees to return to overcrowded and under resources offices does nothing positive to productivity.
 - Staff will be focused on figuring out how to share too-small office spaces and juggle walk-in visitors instead of doing the nuanced and complex work of benefit determinations.
- According to an AFGE survey, canceling the telework policy could result in 50% of the workforce resigning or retiring.
- A shrunken workforce would cause an increase in wait times and delays for initial benefit determinations.
 - Along with increased wait times, the public will notice increased wait times, fraud and abuse.

- Highly trained and experienced employees will not have the time or space to process the claims efficiently and accurately.
- Return to office mandates are arbitrary and add to the detriment of productivity.
 - Employees work longer and are more focused at home under 2024 hybrid work models.
 - We were 6.2% more productive as an agency in 2024 under hybrid work models.

Federal sector Collective Bargaining and Executive Order

- Federal unions cannot negotiate over pay, benefits or hiring/firing decisions.
 - *Unlike private-sector unions, federal unions are limited to bargaining over conditions of employment – not wages, benefits, classifications, which are set by law and Congress.*
- Federal employees are prohibited by law from striking.
 - *Under 5 U.S.C. 7311, federal workers are legally barred from striking and doing so can result in termination and a ban from federal employment.*
- Nearly one-third of federal employees are veterans.
 - *Many federal workers are former service members who bring leadership, discipline and mission commitment to their civilian roles. Stripping their bargaining rights is a betrayal of that service.*
- Collective bargaining is governed by the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978.
 - *The bipartisan law created a structured process for federal workers to address workplace issues without disrupting government operations.*
- Federal unionism has broad historical support.
 - *Presidents from both parties – Reagan, Clinton, Bush, Obama – have upheld the right of federal workers to union representation.*
- Unions improve agency performance – not hinder it.

- *Collective bargaining helps resolve conflicts early, reduced costly litigation, improves retention and boosts morale – all of which support better public service.*
- Removing bargaining rights opens the door to abuse.
 - *Without union representation, employees – especially whistleblowers and veterans – lose vital protections from retaliation and political interference.*
- We contribute to the efficiency and effectiveness of government under 5 U.S.C 71.

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