

AFGE
SSA General
Committee
Legislative Requests
for the
Social Security
Administration



The Social Security Agency is in crisis. Wait times are out of control. Case backlogs require vulnerable Americans to wait years for benefit determinations. It **cannot** continue.

Employees bear the brunt of the crisis. There are too few employees with too little support. Our training is inadequate, and our morale is low. SSA employees need Congress's help and full support to carry out the mission of Social Security.



Congress MUST

1

Fully fund the Agency with \$17.4 billion to meet public demand and protect our country's most vulnerable population. This would take the Agency to the same level of staffing as it had in 2010.

2

Pass a **\$20 billion supplemental appropriation**, providing \$2 billion each year over the next 10 years to improve service delivery, reduce and prevent improper payments, maintain adequate staffing levels, address deferred technology updates, improve training, and put the Agency's salary scale on a competitive footing with other federal agencies and the private sector.

AFGE General Committee

Jessica LaPointe: General Committee Spokesperson, AFGE Council 220 President
info@afgec220.org

Barri Sue Bryant: AFGE Local 2809
President
barrisue.afge@gmail.com

Earl Tucker: AFGE Council 224
President
tuckertwo@sbcglobal.net

Rich Couture: AFGE Council 215
President
rfcouturec215@gmail.com

Anita Autrey: AFGE Local 1923
President
anita.autrey@afge1923.org

Beverly Parks: AFGE Council 109
President
beverlyparks2018@gmail.com

Shelley Washington: AFGE Local 1923
Executive Vice President
shelley.washington@afge1923.org



Social Security, an Agency in Crisis: Supplemental Funding Request

Over the past decade, the limitation that Congress imposed on the Social Security Administration (SSA) administrative expenses (“LAE”)¹ has not met the growing needs of rising beneficiaries. Since 2010, SSA’s inflation adjusted budget has been slashed by 17 percent. Baby boomers are turning age 65 at a rate of 10k a day and the number of beneficiaries is rapidly increasing, yet slashed budgets for SSA have meant the loss of 10,000 workers. Cuts from the Continuing Resolution (CR) are forcing SSA to suspend new hires and limit overtime. In 2010, SSA was the 2nd best place to work amongst large federal agencies but has declined to the worst where it is now 17th out of 17. Attrition rates among SSA employees are soaring and 54% of current workers are making plans to leave the agency within the next year. All of this has had disastrous effects on customer service:

- ❖ Initial disability claims processing has more than doubled in the last 5 years going from 3.4 months in FY 2018 to 7.5 months as of December 2023, with a million claims pending a medical determination.²
- ❖ Average wait times for public calls to be answered on the 800 number have increased from 3 minutes in 2010 to 36 minutes in 2023.³
- ❖ There are now 4.2 million backlogged items pending at the Payment Centers.⁴
- ❖ Average wait times for disability hearings increased from 11 months in FY 22 to 15 months in FY 23.
- ❖ Today it takes on average 2.5 years to get a hearing decision after initially applying.
- ❖ According to a prior GAO report, 10,000 Americans are going bankrupt and another 10,000 are dying a year while awaiting their decision through the hearing level.
- ❖ An average of 840 internet claims pending per Workload Support Unit employee.
- ❖ According to OIG, in FY 22 \$21 billion in overpayments remained uncollected. SSA overpaid 2 million beneficiaries alone in the last 2 years.

78% of Americans agree that SSA deserves more funding to meet public need; it is imperative that Congress act accordingly and fully fund SSA. Congressional reports show that 20% of calls coming into lawmakers’ offices are related to Social Security benefits and service.

To improve customer service and fix the recruitment and retention crisis infecting SSA, Congress should enact a \$20 billion supplemental funding package for SSA to use over the next 10 years, like the recent supplemental funding provided to the IRS. Importantly, unlike the IRS funding, this money comes out of Social Security’s dedicated revenue and so does not add even a penny to the deficit. This funding would be available to revitalize SSA beyond the annual LAE and would be partially offset by an increased ability to reduce the \$21.6 billion in overpayments incorrectly issued and future overpayment prevention.

Supplemental funding for SSA could allow the agency to replace the 10,000 workers lost since 2010 (\$2.5 billion). It could help alleviate its recruitment and retention problems by implementing competitive pay and benefits (\$3.2 billion). This would allow SSA to provide grade increases, to help with childcare and student loans that nearly every other federal agency offers, reinstate a popular vision assistance program for employees who suffer from using agency equipment, improve mental health support, and increase transit and parking subsidies to cover employee costs more effectively. \$3 billion would allow the agency to modernize its technology to better serve the public, including an improved phone system to answer calls and improved interface technology with other government agencies to streamline the claims processing system. Finally, \$2 billion of this supplemental funding could be used to increase field office security with additional bag checks, screening equipment and guards, addressing the increased severity and volume of threats employees face due to frustrated customers experiencing vital service delays.

¹ Technically, Congress does not appropriate SSA’s budget. Rather, it limits how much of Social Security’s accumulated surplus (currently at \$2.8 trillion) SSA can spend each year.

² <https://www.SSA.gov>

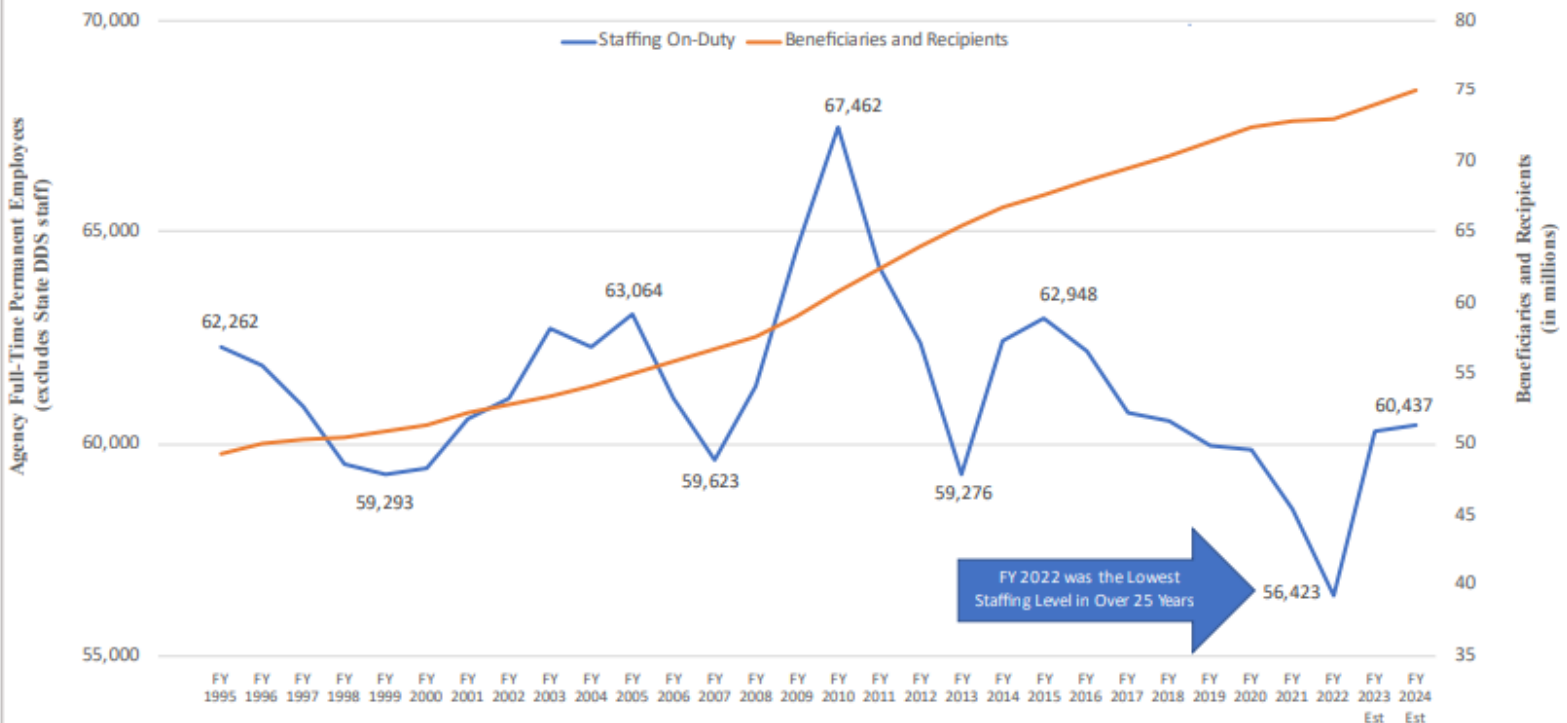
³ <https://www.ssa.gov/open/data/800-number-average-speed-to-answer.html>

⁴ <https://www.ssa.gov/budget/assets/materials/2024/2024BO.pdf>



STAFFING LOSSES AND LACK OF FUNDS TO REPLACE STAFF ARE AFFECTING SERVICE DELIVERY AND PROGRAM INTEGRITY

Our Budget Supports Restored Staffing Levels to Help Us Serve More Beneficiaries



<https://www.ssa.gov/budget/assets/materials/2024/2024BO.pdf>

SSA currently only has 18,500 Claims Specialists (10,800 fewer employees than what is needed to process claims).

This means the claims specialists who already dedicate more than half of their workweek to public general inquiry questions and Social Security card processing due to the lack of staff, are overburdened with caseloads - causing stress and worsening attrition.

In FY 23 it would take 29,300 work years to complete the existing Retirement, Survivor, and Disability claims. SSA employees need support. **Now.**

A SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION IN CRISIS

AFGE FY 2024 Budget Talking Points

Re: Current congressional funding prospects & supplemental proposal

1/31/24

- SSA is in a dire state of emergency after years of underfunding.
 - SSA's administrative funding for basic operations fell by more than 17 percent from 2010 to 2022, after accounting for inflation.
 - Staffing for SSA is at a 25-year low.
 - SSA is ranked as the worst federal agency to work for, with working conditions leading to high attrition rates and the frequent loss of highly trained workers.
- Baby boomers are turning age 65 at a rate of 10k a day and the number of beneficiaries is rapidly increasing, yet slashed budgets for SSA have meant the loss of 11,000 workers.
 - Cuts from the Continuing Resolution (CR) are forcing SSA to suspend new hires and limit overtime.
 - In 2010, SSA was ranked the 2nd best place to work among large federal agencies but now ranks last out of 17.
 - Attrition rates among SSA employees are soaring and 54% of current workers are considering making plans to leave the agency within the next year. All of this has had disastrous effects on customer service.
- SSA is funded through the Labor-HHS appropriations process, where it competes for funding against other critical social programs. However, SSA differs from many other appropriated programs in that it has its own dedicated revenue stream (FICA) and its own trust fund.
 - Other self-funded programs or fee-based programs are not subject to the same appropriations funding process.
 - SSA, with its own dedicated revenue stream, should not see its funding count towards any appropriations spending cost.
- 78% of Americans agree that SSA deserves more funding to meet public need; it is imperative that Congress act accordingly and fully fund SSA.
 - Initial disability claims processing has more than doubled in the last 5 years going from 3.4 months in FY 2018 to 7.5 months as of December 2023, with a million claims pending a medical determination.
 - Average wait times for public calls to be answered on the 800# have increased from 3 minutes in 2010 to 36 minutes in 2023.
 - There are now 4.2 million backlogged items pending at the Payment Centers.

- Average wait times for disability hearings increased from 11 months in FY 22 to 15 months in FY 23.
 - Today it takes on average 2.5 years to get a hearing decision after initially applying.
 - According to a prior GAO report, 10,000 Americans are going bankrupt and another 10,000 are dying a year while awaiting their decision through the hearing level.
 - There are an average of 840 internet claims pending per Workload Support Unit employee.
 - According to SSA, in FY 23 \$23.1 billion in overpayments remained uncollected. SSA overpaid 2 million beneficiaries alone in the last 2 years.
- Because the regular appropriations process has been failing SSA, AFGE is seeking an emergency supplemental funding package for SSA, similar to the additional funds provided to the IRS last year.
 - A \$20 billion supplemental funding package for SSA to use over the next 10 years, would allow SSA to revitalize beyond the annual LAE.
 - This would be partially offset by an increased ability to reduce the \$23.1 billion in overpayments incorrectly issued and future overpayment prevention.
 - This funding should not be subject to spending caps or other spending rules for programs offsets.
- Supplemental funding for SSA could allow the agency to replace the 11,000 workers lost since 2010 (\$2.5 billion).
- Supplemental funding could help alleviate its recruitment and retention problems by implementing competitive pay and benefits (\$3.2 billion).
 - This would allow SSA to provide grade increases, to help with childcare and student loans that nearly every other federal agency offers, reinstate a popular vision assistance program for employees who suffer from using agency equipment, improve mental health support, and increase transit and parking subsidies to cover employee costs more effectively.
- \$3 billion could allow the Agency to modernize its technology to better serve the public.
 - This funding could go towards an improved phone system to answer calls and improved interface technology with other government agencies to streamline the claims processing system.

- \$2 billion of this supplemental funding could be used to increase field office security.
 - This would include funding for additional bag checks, screening equipment and guards, addressing the increased severity and volume of threats employees face due to frustrated customers experiencing vital service delays.
- It's time that Congress recognizes Social Security as one of our nation's largest and most successful programs and provide \$20 billion in emergency supplemental funding to address the public service, recruitment and retention crisis damaging SSA.
- We need to protect access and entitlements through the Social Security Expansion Act and Social Security 2100 Act.
 - The Social Security Expansion Act will increase benefits and certain taxes related to the Social Security program to ensure its capabilities.
 - Social Security 2100 Act establishes the Social Security Trust Fund, which replaces the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Trust Fund and the Federal Disability Insurance Trust Fund.
- The Social Security Agency is in a crisis that only funding can solve. Congress needs to step up and prioritize our nation's most vulnerable before it's too late.

CONGRESSIONAL STAFF BRIEFING

Social Security Administration: An Agency in Crisis



HOSTED BY:
**SOCIAL SECURITY WORKS &
AMERICAN FEDERATION OF
GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES**



JOHN LARSON

D-CT Representative



NANCY ALTMAN

*President of Social Security
Works*



JESSICA LAPOINTE

AFGE Council 220 President



KATHLEEN ROMIG

*Center for Budget and Policy
Priorities*



RICH COUTURE

AFGE Council 215 President

JOIN IN PERSON OR WATCH LIVESTREAMED AT:  [WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/AFGEUNION](https://www.facebook.com/afgeunion)

THE DETAILS



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2024



10.00 AM - 11.00 AM

LOCATION

**THE SENATE BUDGET COMMITTEE HEARING ROOM
DIRKSEN 608 SOB**

**50 CONSTITUTION AVE NE
WASHINGTON DC 20002**



[WWW.AFGEC220.ORG](https://www.afgec220.org)



ALERT:

SOCIAL SECURITY IN DANGER

To save your benefits, Congress **MUST**

- Protect access
 - Fully fund the Agency's annual budget
 - Provide \$20 billion in supplemental funding
- Protect entitlements
 - Social Security Expansion Act
 - Social Security 2100 Act

Call your Congressperson **TODAY** and tell them to save Social Security.

(315) 817-5437



JOIN THE AFGE GENERAL COMMITTEE **2024** LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE - WASHINGTON, DC

Day 1
Sunday

Strategic Planning Meeting

Hyatt Regency Washington Hotel
400 New Jersey Ave NW Capital
Meeting Rm of Hyatt

11 February 2024
4.30 PM - 6:30 PM



Attend virtually

Day 2
Monday

Legislative Visits

12 February 2024 9:00 AM

Day 3
Tuesday

Staffer Briefing

13 February 2024 9:30 AM
608 Dirksen, the Senate Budget
Committee hearing room.



AFGE Rally at 12 Noon
Tuesday
February 13, 2024

Day 4
Wednesday

Legislative Visits

14 February 2024 at 9.00 AM

Day 5
Thursday

Legislative Visits

15 February 2024 at 9.00 AM



Register: <https://events.afge.org/event/764db99f-6c4e-4b43-a6f8-2730c664b0c5/summary>

