



## **AFGE Council 220 Calls for Immediate Halt to SSA Operational Changes, Demands Stakeholder and Frontline Worker Input**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – As Social Security Administration (SSA) leadership moves forward with significant operational changes for Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26), AFGE Council 220, representing 25,000 SSA field operations workers, is calling for **meaningful stakeholder input**—including the union representing frontline and support workers, community members, and the American public—before fundamental changes are implemented to an agency that has served as America's social safety net for nearly a century.

### **Operational Shifts and the Staffing Crisis**

Recent SSA announcements reveal major changes are planned, including a reorganization expanding back-office functions, a move toward centralized processing away from local field offices, and new performance targets that anticipate serving only **15 million in-person visitors** in FY26, down sharply from 31.6 million in FY25.

"These are major changes to how Social Security has operated well for 90 years," said AFGE Council 220 President Jessica LaPointe. "But the stakeholders—the customers, the taxpayers who fund this agency, the communities we serve, and the frontline workers who process the work—are yet to be meaningfully consulted."

The union emphasizes these changes are happening amid a severe staffing crisis:

- SSA is at a **near 60-year staffing low** while serving record numbers of beneficiaries.
- The workload has more than tripled since 1967, with SSA attempting to serve **1,480 beneficiaries per staff member** in 2025, compared to 480 in 1967.
- The agency saw **2,000 frontline staff take buyouts** in March 2025, and an additional **7,000 to 10,000 or more staff losses** are projected between FY25 and FY26.

### **Frontline Reality vs. Leadership Metrics**

AFGE Council 220 contends that while SSA leadership communications highlight improvements in certain metrics, the reality on the ground is different, indicating a decline in service quality.

"We're concerned that operational plans are being adjusted to make it appear goals are being met... that's moving the goalposts—not improving service," said LaPointe. "Field office appointment calendars are completely booked, wait lists for all appointment types continue to grow, and processing times for benefits are increasingly delayed."

The union highlights that fundamental community service is eroding:

- Same-day service has been largely eliminated.
- In many regions, a member of the public cannot speak to a representative in their local office due to the way phone calls are now being routed.
- Field offices are potentially closing, such as the case of **Hudson, New York**, which is allegedly being bought out by a hotel with no replacement SSA office, and **no community input. Ironwood, Michigan, and Bozeman and Havre, Montana, remain closed** for in person service due reportedly to **understaffing**.
- Customer satisfaction metrics by service type were **stripped from the SSA website** this year, removing transparency.

"In the private sector, if customers aren't satisfied, they can take their business elsewhere. With Social Security, there is no alternative—there is only one SSA," LaPointe added. "That makes listening to the public and measuring their actual satisfaction even more important, not less."

### **A Path Forward: Partnership and Transparency**

AFGE Council 220 is formally requesting that SSA leadership and Congress immediately adopt a six-point plan to ensure modernization is effective, transparent, and driven by actual community needs:

1. **Include Frontline Worker Expertise:** Workers who perform the work daily must have meaningful input through their union into workflow redesigns.
2. **Conduct Comprehensive Staffing Assessments:** Assess community needs with transparent data before shifting workloads or closing offices.
3. **Restore Data Transparency:** Return removed performance metrics to SSA.gov, including historical comparisons, customer satisfaction data, and current wait times for all service types.
4. **Engage Communities:** Consult communities and advocates before closing or reducing local capacity.
5. **Survey the Public:** Ask Americans how they prefer to receive service and whether current service meets their needs.
6. **Ensure Adequate Funding:** Congress must allow SSA to spend up to **2% of benefit payouts** on the operational budget—a reasonable increase from the current less than 1%—to fund sustained hiring that meets community needs and retain a well-trained career civil servant workforce.

"We're not opposed to modernization or efficiency improvements," LaPointe said. "We're asking to be partners in that process. We need a seat at the table, and decisions need to be driven by comprehensive data and stakeholder input—not by assumptions."