



AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO

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Dear Representative:

On December 5th, the Social Security Administration (SSA) announced that its network of 1250 field offices will no longer provide Social Security Number (SSN) printouts or benefit verification forms to the public. The change, which was scheduled to begin April 1, was delayed by the House and Senate Appropriations Committees because of serious concerns about the harsh impact of this plan on low-income and unemployed Americans, as well as those without computers, printers or computer expertise. It is now scheduled to begin on August 1.

According to SSA's own numbers, 11 million people used field offices for one or the other of these essential documents last year. After August 1 for the printouts and October 1 for the benefit verification forms, two options will be available to the public: calling the 800 number or registering for MY SSA. In our view, neither option is close to adequate to serve the large and diverse population affected by this service elimination.

Because of staffing reductions at SSA call centers, the average busy rate in FY 2013 for answering public telephone calls on the 800 number network was nearly triple what it was in FY 2012. Adding potentially millions of more calls to the existing system is a recipe for disaster.

Similarly, MY SSA is not yet ready to handle existing traffic let alone the prospect of several million new registration requests. It is unlikely that most Americans know their astrological sign or car payment terms off-hand, yet MY SSA requires correct answers to these or similar questions in order to access the system.

SSA first advanced this plan to save money, but now they are saying that the agency's providing SSN printouts and benefit verification forms is not *mission critical work*. This is nonsense. To the 11 million people who need these forms, this work is absolutely critical. In addition, due to the cost of printing Social Security cards as compared to a printout at a Social Security field office, it is more likely the change will cost money. We urge you to do whatever you can to ensure that these vital forms remain available to people needing them.

Of equal importance, AFGE strongly supports H.R. 3997, the Social Security Administration Accountability Act of 2014. Introduced by Rep. Brian Higgins (D-NY) and Rep. John Duncan (R-TN), H.R. 3997 will impose an immediate moratorium on the closure of Social Security offices around the country. Over the past three years, some 80 field offices have been closed – not because it made sense or even saved money, but because the lease to the building was expiring.

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Every office closure creates a serious problem for the communities served. For the disabled, the longer trip required by an office closure creates a particular burden. The same is true for those without access to convenient transportation or who are unemployed and in need of a Social Security number printout to get a job.

For the first time in several years, SSA received an increase in its appropriation for FY 2014. Some of that money can and should be used to reopen closed Social Security field offices and to maintain the critical service of providing SSN printouts and benefit verification forms at those and all other offices.

Please join us in ensuring that the future of SSA remains as strong as the program it manages.

Sincerely yours,



Beth Moten
Legislative and Political Director
AFGE



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