



# News Release

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### **Social Security Executive Diane Braunstein Wins the 2011 Service to America Medal**

#### **Compassionate Allowances Program Expedites Disability Benefits**

Diane Braunstein, now the Associate Commissioner for International Programs, received the 2011 Citizen Services Medal from the Partnership for Public Service at last night's Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medal Awards Gala. Ms. Braunstein oversaw the development of the Compassionate Allowances program, which fast-tracks disability decisions to ensure that Americans with the most serious disabilities receive their benefit decisions within days instead of months or years.

"All of us at Social Security are very proud of Diane and the results of her hard work on Compassionate Allowances," said Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security.

"Through her efforts, this expedited process has already helped about 100,000 people with severe disabilities get benefit decisions within days instead of months or years."

The Compassionate Allowances initiative identifies claims that are likely allowances because the nature of the applicant's disease or condition clearly meets the statutory standard for disability. With the help of sophisticated new information technology, the agency can quickly identify potential Compassionate Allowances and then quickly make decisions.

Social Security launched the program in 2008 with a list of 50 diseases and conditions. It recently announced 12 new conditions involving severe heart diseases, which increased the total number of Compassionate Allowances conditions to 100. The conditions include certain cancers, adult brain disorders, a number of rare genetic disorders of children, early-onset Alzheimer's disease, idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, and other disorders. The agency is continually adding new conditions or diseases to the list, and recently announced a small grant program for graduate students that will help Social Security improve its list.

The legacy of Ms Braunstein's work with Compassionate Allowances will expand access to disability benefits to Americans with the most severe disabilities while reducing the backlog of disability applications. Quicker decisions and expedited processes reduce the burden on the

medical community because they no longer need to provide extensive medical records for these cases. If a person reports a condition found on the Compassionate Allowance list, Social Security simply confirms the condition with the medical source. The program also reduces the burden on businesses of producing employment records.

The application process is now faster for people applying under the Compassionate Allowances program. The online disability application at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov) recognizes conditions that qualify for Compassionate Allowances and streamlines the application by omitting information not needed for the agency's decision.

For more information on the Compassionate Allowances initiative, please visit [www.socialsecurity.gov/compassionateallowances](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/compassionateallowances).

The Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medals pays tribute to federal employees who have made significant contributions to our country. The award encourages a new generation to consider public service careers by sharing the inspiring stories of unsung heroes.

More information about the award is available at [www.servicetoamericamedals.org](http://www.servicetoamericamedals.org).

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