



News Release

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Security Proposes Legislation to End Furloughs of Federally Paid State Disability Workers

Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security, today announced that the agency is submitting legislation to Congress that would prohibit states, without the Commissioner's prior authorization, from reducing the number of state personnel who make disability determinations for Social Security or the hours they work below the amount the agency authorizes.

"It is long past time that states end these unconscionable furloughs and hiring freezes that needlessly harm citizens with disabilities," Commissioner Astrue said. "States realize no fiscal savings whatsoever from these actions and this legislation would prevent needless delays in the disability determination process. I am grateful for the President's support and urge Congress to move quickly to help us make this provision the law of the land."

More than a dozen states have implemented furloughs and hiring freezes that affect the federally paid state workers who make disability determinations for Social Security. The state agencies that employ these workers in their disability determination service (DDS) components receive 100 percent of their funding from the Federal government. Accordingly, states do not save any money by imposing furloughs and hiring freezes on federally funded employees. Rather, they slow benefits to some of the most vulnerable citizens – for example, furloughs in California in fiscal year 2010 delayed payment of over \$11 million in benefits to more than 40,000 citizens with disabilities. State-imposed furloughs and hiring freezes also reduce state income tax revenue and increase unemployment in the state.

"The members of Local 1000 have always believed that furloughing federally funded positions doesn't make economic sense and that has been proven in California during these past 18 months that Governor Schwarzenegger has imposed furloughs on state employees," Yvonne Walker, President of Service Employees International Union Local 1000 said. "I applaud Social Security for initiating legislation that would prevent further bad economic policy from going forward. This provision will not only help DDS workers, but the claimants who rely on the services our members provide."

“We commend the Commissioner for his forceful and dedicated leadership in taking this bold action,” said Susan X. Smith, President of the National Association of Disability Examiners (NADE). “Our members are witness to the impact the current economic recession has had for disabled citizens and we are working hard to meet the dramatic increase in claims for benefits. These furloughs further compound the problems faced by disabled citizens by creating unnecessary delays in the processing of their claims. NADE urges quick action with regards to this legislative proposal.”

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