



September 25, 2006

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20505

Dear Chairman Cochran

The National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU) is proud to represent the bargaining unit employees of the Office of Disability Adjudication and Review (formerly the Office of Hearings and Appeals) at the Social Security Administration (SSA). We are deeply concerned that unless SSA is funded at a higher amount than has been allocated by the Senate Appropriations Committee, SSA will be forced to furlough its employees for ten days as well as make other harmful cutbacks in hiring, overtime, and agency operations. The Appropriations Committee's allocation is \$401 million below the administration's request and \$54 million below this year's level.

It cannot be overstated how counterproductive such actions would be. Sending employees home for ten days without pay is not only unfair to the employees but it denies Social Security beneficiaries service regarding earned benefits. Most Social Security administrative expenses are funded out of trust fund monies, so the funds saved by furloughing employees do not provide funding for any other government program.

The Committee's proposed funding will also mean that SSA will reduce the number of Continuing Disability Reviews (the work performed by the NTEU-represented employees at SSA) from a planned level of 597,000 to only 111,000. Continuing Disability Reviews save the trust fund \$10 for every \$1 spent in administering them, so the failure to properly fund the administrative expenses for this program actually costs the trust fund money.

I am sure it is self-evident that imposing a two-week furlough without pay on exemplary and hard working employees is severely damaging to agency morale and productivity. But I would like to particularly draw to your attention the fact that as employees are facing loss of a paycheck through no fault of their own, SSA is attempting to hire qualified individuals to the new position of Federal Reviewing Officials. These new positions are part of innovative reforms at SSA to eliminate the huge backlog in disability appeals. It will speed decisions and reduce bureaucracy. Yet, just as SSA is seeking highly skilled individuals to move into these positions, it is being put in a position of having to impose unprecedented actions harmful to employees

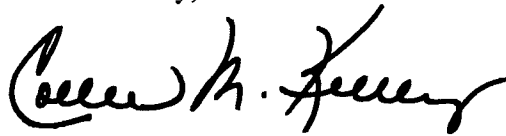
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such as furloughs. Not surprisingly, there are reports that SSA is having recruitment difficulties for these positions.

I hope that NTEU can count on your assistance to add \$400 million in funding for SSA administrative expenses before this legislation is passed by the Senate.

If you or your staff have any further questions on this matter, please contact Kurt Vorndran in our Legislation Department at 202.572.5500, ext. 7056. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colleen M. Kelley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Colleen M. Kelley
National President

cc: Kurt Vorndran