

Report Summary

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

April 2009



Objective

To address the requests of Congressmen John S. Tanner and John Lewis that we provide the Committee on Ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives (Committee), with recommended management reforms for Social Security Administration (SSA) operations.

Background

In a March 10, 2009 letter, the Congressmen explained the Committee initiated a major oversight review to determine whether programs within its jurisdiction are achieving their policy objectives and being efficiently and effectively administered. The initiative is pursuant to the request of the Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives, that the Committee conduct oversight of all aspects of Federal spending and Government operations within its jurisdiction.

To view the full report, visit
http://www.ssa.gov/oig/ADO_BEPDF/A-08-09-29152.pdf

Congressional Response Report: Opportunities and Challenges for the Social Security Administration (A-08-09-29152)

Our Findings

To its credit, and given the enormity and complexity of its mission, SSA generally provides accurate and responsive service to millions of customers and continually seeks improvements to its processes. According to SSA, the Agency has been significantly under-funded for decades. Additionally, its workload has increased through new legislative mandates and a growing population of retiring and disabled constituents. As such, SSA has made difficult decisions as to which workloads were its highest priorities and which received less attention. Unfortunately, the aforementioned under-funding, increased workloads, and the current economic downturn have resulted in severe backlogs in some critical workloads—and, unacceptably long wait times for customers who seek SSA's assistance at some of the most challenging times in their lives.

Our Conclusion

SSA will be faced with unprecedented challenges in the next decade—a significantly growing workload, but a workforce that will be drained through its own retirements. As such, human capital, program, and systems planning are more important than ever. We are encouraged that SSA recently received much needed budget increases to address some of its immediate concerns. Yet, we encourage SSA to continue developing innovative and long-term solutions to problems that exist now and challenges that the Agency will face in the future. We appreciate the opportunity to provide our perspective on SSA's operations and respond to the Committee's specific questions and hope our insight will assist the Committee in its oversight role.