

ALLIANCE FOR RETIRED AMERICANS

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Don't Close Social Security Administration Offices

Alliance for Retired Americans Says Current Number of Offices is Needed Now More than Ever

The following statement was issued today by Edward Coyle, Executive Director of the Alliance for Retired Americans, in response to plans to close Social Security Administration offices around the country.

My name is Ed Coyle, and I am Executive Director of the Alliance for Retired Americans.

Thank you to AFGE, not only for putting this event together, but also for your commitment to seniors.

And thank you to Representative Brian Higgins, who could not be here with us today, for introducing legislation that would help Social Security recipients.

I am pleased to be part of an event that is so closely tied to the Alliance's mission.

The Alliance brings together over 3.5 million retirees from labor and community-based groups through a grassroots movement to improve the health care and economic security of older Americans.

Today, we have come together to tell Congress to pass H.R. 5110, which Rep. Higgins recently introduced.

The President's budget does not sufficiently fund the SSA Administrative Budget.

The Social Security Customer Service Improvement Act would require the Social Security Administration Commissioner to submit the SSA budget to Congress and the President without revisions directly, so the President can't revise it.

SSA would not be able to close field offices until 180 days after submitting to congressional committees a report justifying the selection of offices for closure.

These offices are necessary because SSA provides essential services for all Americans.

It maintains a record of every worker's earnings, which will be used to calculate the amount of future Social Security benefit payments for workers, their dependents and their survivors.

All workers receive an annual statement, which estimates the amount of the Social Security benefits payable based on their work history.

These statements assist in retirement planning.

The Administration also processes all activity related to claims for Social Security benefits.

Social Security employees respond to inquiries about Medicare entitlement (including Part D matters.)

It is essential that adequate funding be available for the Social Security Administration.

The President's budget proposal includes a 5.97% percent increase in funding for FY 2009 for the Social Security Administration.

The President's budget proposal is \$100 million less than the SSA Commissioner's budget request.

Under the Higgins bill, Congress would get the full request from SSA.

That is an important point, because a baby boomer turns 60 every 7.5 seconds.

With SSA already facing widely reported backlogs with disability claims, this is no time to close hundreds of field offices.

We must keep local SSA offices open to offer easy access to seniors who can't travel longer distances or deal with the maze of automatic phone calls.

Thank you, everyone, for doing your part to increase public awareness of this issue.

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