

**The National Council of Social Security Management Associations, Inc.**  
**GREYSTONE GROUP WASHINGTON REPORT**  
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**Hearing on “That’s Not the Government Calling: Protecting Seniors from the Social Security Impersonation Scam”**

On Wednesday, January 29, 2020, the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging held a hearing titled, “That’s Not the Government Calling: Protecting Seniors from the Social Security Impersonation Scam.” At the invitation of Chairman Susan Collins (R-ME), Justin Groshon, District Manager of the Saco, Maine, Social Security office and President of the New England Social Security Management Association (NESSMA) was invited to provide testimony on behalf of NCSSMA. Our sincere thanks to Justin for representing the National Council, and to all of the NCSSMA members who completed our survey in October 2019 related to the various telephone scams and the impact on field offices and teleservice centers. The data and feedback provided in response to the survey were essential to the testimony we presented at the hearing.

According to the Committee’s **annual Fraud Report** released at the hearing, the Social Security scam has become the most-reported fraud to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the Senate Special Committee on Aging’s Fraud Hotline. Since creating its new online form less than three months ago, the Social Security Administration’s Office of Inspector General has received more than 115,000 complaints about the scam.

The January 29 hearing included testimony not only from NCSSMA, but from Social Security Administration (SSA) Commissioner Andrew Saul; SSA’s Inspector General Gail S. Ennis; Machel Andersen, a victim who lost \$150,000 to scammers; and Nora Dowd Eisenhower who offered ideas on solutions and best practices for reducing the vulnerability of older Americans.

Commissioner Saul’s testimony focused on an overview of SSA’s efforts to address the Social Security impersonation scam. The Commissioner’s testimony included information related to SSA’s public awareness campaign, associated changes to the agency’s public-facing voicemail messages, and the new online scam reporting form. Commissioner Saul repeatedly noted that educating Americans about which calls are suspicious is the best way to tackle the problem.

Testimony provided by Inspector General Ennis focused on the various techniques and trends, and discussed the scam’s impact on SSA’s day-to-day operations. She also spoke about the actions taken by the SSA Office of the Inspector General to investigate and disrupt the scam.

Senate Special Committee on Aging members present:

Chairman Susan Collins (R-ME)  
Sen. Martha McSally (R-AZ)  
Sen. Josh Hawley (R-MO)  
Sen. Mike Braun (R-IN)

Ranking Member Bob Casey (D-PA)  
Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY)  
Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT)  
Sen. Doug Jones (D-AL)  
Sen. Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ)  
Sen. Jacky Rosen (D-NV)

You can view the webcast of the hearing at the following link:

[January 29, 2020, US Senate Special Committee on Aging Hearing Webcast](#)

Opening statements of Chairman Collins (R-ME) and Ranking Member Casey (D-PA):

[Opening Statement of Chairman Susan Collins \(R-ME\)](#)

[Opening Statement of Ranking Member Bob Casey \(D-PA\)](#)

Written Statements of Panel 1:

[Statement of the Honorable Andrew Saul, Commissioner, Social Security Administration](#)

[Statement of the Honorable Gail S. Ennis, Inspector General, Social Security Administration](#)

Chairman Collins (R-ME) did acknowledge the efforts of both Commissioner Saul and Inspector General Ennis relative to the scam, stating, “When this Committee first started becoming aware of this scam two years ago, we contacted the Social Security Administration and, frankly, we had a very difficult time getting them to mention and realize how important it was for the agency to be front and center in communicating with beneficiaries about this scam,” Collins said. “That has completely changed since the two of you took your positions last year.”

Written Statements of Panel 2:

[Statement of Machel Andersen, Victim of the Social Security Impersonation Scam, Ogden, UT](#)

[Statement of Justin Groshon, Manager, Saco, ME, Social Security Office on behalf of NCSSMA](#)

## Statement of Nora Dowd Eisenhower, Executive Director, Mayor's Commission on Aging, Philadelphia, PA

During the question and answer portion of the hearing following Panel 2, Chairman Collins (R-ME) directed a line of questions to Justin that provided an opportunity for us to speak to the impact of the telephone scams on not only the field offices in the State of Maine, but also across the nation. Justin was also able to provide information to the Committee regarding the reality that the scams have eroded trust in federal employees. So much so, that when SSA employees follow up by telephone with customers they may not believe it is actually SSA calling them. Justin also detailed the additional challenges that have resulted from the various scams including extraneous contacts; customers having to travel what are sometimes lengthy distances to visit a field office; and times when paperwork has been mailed to an office and the customer is still leery of the follow-up contact actually being from SSA.

Justin was also able to respond to a question from Chairman Collins (R-ME) related to the steps that field office staff take when a customer comes in to report that they may have been a victim of a scam or may have inadvertently released identifying information in response to a telephone call or other form of communication.

There was repeated focus throughout the hearing that public awareness and education are critical to addressing the various Social Security impersonation scams. Justin was able to re-enforce this message in response to a line of questioning near the end of the hearing from Ranking Member Casey (D-PA).

Chairman Susan Collins (R-ME) concluded the hearing and noted that any additional Questions for the Record are due by Friday, February 7.

News selections related to the hearing:

- Casey: 'Anyone' Can Fall Victim To Social Security Phone Scam  
<https://www.ellwoodcityledger.com/news/20200129/casey-anyone-can-fall-victim-to-social-security-phone-scam>
- CBS This Morning On SS Scams  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0GXGJGOZcF8&feature=youtu.be>
- Fraudulent Social Security Calls Now No. 1 Phone Scam: Senate Report  
<https://thehill.com/policy/finance/480559-fraudulent-social-security-calls-now-no-1-phone-scam-in-us-senate-report>
- Social Security Administrators Say Their Agency Is Getting Barraged With Scam Complaints  
<https://www.sunjournal.com/2020/01/29/social-security-administrators-say-their-agency-is-getting-barraged-with-scam-complaints/>

- Social Security Scams Are Costing Americans Millions. Here's How To Spot Them.  
<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/social-security-scams-are-costing-americans-millions-heres-how-to-spot-them/>

### **NCSSMA Twitter Account**

Reminder: NCSSMA has a Twitter account and we encourage you to join in and follow us! You can view and follow our page on your **home computer** at <http://twitter.com/NCSSMAORG> or your **personal mobile device** at <https://mobile.twitter.com/NCSSMAORG>.

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