

The National Council of Social Security Management Associations, Inc.

**THE WASHINGTON REPORT
LEGISLATIVE REPORT 42-2003**

October 29, 2003

- **Congressional Action Related to the Social Security Program for the Period of October 20 - 24, 2003**

Below is a compilation of recent congressional action related to the Social Security Program. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or would like us to provide additional information regarding any of the measures.

Sen. Max Baucus (D-MT) made the following statement on the floor of the Senate on October 23, 2003. (*Congressional Record*, p. S13132.)

“Mr. President, I rise today to highlight a small band of employees in my home State who deserve special recognition for the consistent high quality work they do. I am proud and pleased to honor Michelle Thibodeau, Chief of the Disability Determination Services office in Helena, MT, and her entire staff. Special recognition must also go to Cathy Surdock who works on youth claims and has been singled out for her excellence.

My constituents who face disabilities depend on those at the Disability Determination Services office to evaluate their claims and issue a fair and timely decision. Issuing these decisions quickly is of the utmost importance and makes a real difference to a lot of Montanans. The regional Social Security Administration Commissioner in Denver has recognized Montana's Disability Determination Services office for having the Nation's best processing time for claims. The Helena office averages 68 days processing time as compared to the national average of 110 days. This important honor is for work accomplished during Federal fiscal year 2002. This office won the same award for fiscal year 1999. Additionally, in 2001, they were awarded the Commissioner's Citation for Quality. Michelle's office reviews about 12,000 claims for benefits each year, 2000 of which involve children.

This award recognizes the staff “for exemplary performance in accuracy, timeliness and productivity in providing exceptional service to Montana's citizens with disabilities.” Montanans that find themselves physically and mentally challenged are grateful for the heroic steps that Michelle's staff has taken to address their needs in a timely fashion. The professionalism, compassion and technical expertise exhibited by the dedicated staff at the Disability Determination Services office is an example for us all.

In closing, I would like to offer my congratulations to Michelle, Cathy and the entire crew at Disability Determination Services and also my thanks for the good work you do daily. This is just another example of neighbor helping neighbor in the great State of Montana.”

- **Congressional Action Related To Civil Service Issues for the Period of October 20 - 24, 2003**

Below is a compilation of recent congressional action related to civil service issues. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or would like us to provide additional information regarding any of the measures.

Sen. Paul Sarbanes (D-MD) introduced **S.1783**:

Title: A bill to provide that transit pass transportation fringe benefits be made available to all qualified Federal employees in the National Capital Region; to allow passenger carriers which are owned or leased by the Government to be used to transport Government employees between their place of employment and mass transit facilities, and for other purposes.

Sponsor: Sen. Sarbanes, Paul S. [MD] (introduced 10/23/2003) **Cosponsors:** 3

Latest Major Action: 10/23/2003 Referred to Senate committee. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

The Washington Report
418 C Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002
202-547-8530/FAX 202-547-8532
Contact: Sara Garland or Rachel Emmons
e-mail: sarag@greystone-group.com or rachele@greystone-group.com