

The National Council of Social Security Management Associations, Inc.
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Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Budget And Appropriations

The FY 2020 federal appropriations process is coming to a close. Congress will vote this week to approve a \$1.4 trillion spending package, split into two pieces of legislation, that President Trump is expected to sign.

The two funding measures together contain the 12 FY 2020 appropriations bills. The Labor-HHS Appropriations Subcommittee, which includes the Social Security Administration's administrative funding, is included in [H.R. 1865](#), the Consolidated Domestic and International Assistance bill. The following are links to the [bill text for H.R. 1865](#); the [Statement of Managers](#); and the [summary of the Labor-HHS section](#).

Included in the legislation is a \$100 million increase for the Social Security Administration's base administrative expenses for "additional hires and resources to improve public service at SSA field offices and direct service operations." This recommended level of funding is \$97.945 million above the President's Budget Request.

Specific to the Social Security Administration (SSA) the Labor-HHS report includes the following language related to SSA's Limitation on Administrative Expenses (LAE) account:

*SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION (SSA)
LIMITATION ON ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES*

The agreement includes an increase of \$100,000,000 for SSA's base administrative expenses for additional hires and resources to improve public service at SSA field offices and direct service operations.

Continuing Disability Reviews.-The agreement directs SSA to include in its next continuing disability review (CDR) report to Congress an evaluation of its CDR prioritization models and a cost-benefit analysis of how it uses estimated savings in determining which beneficiaries receive a full-medical CDR. Additionally, the agreement requests in the fiscal year 2021 Congressional Justification, the process by which SSA intends to pace its CDR workload to properly manage Limitation on Administrative Expenses funding.

Disability Case Processing System (DCPS).-SSA is encouraged to engage with States to explore all possible options for modernization of the case processing system, to align with the needs of each State, so long as such options have similar or better functionality as DCPS, similar or lower costs to DCPS, and are consistent with Federal procurement and security standards. SSA should continue to provide regular updates on the effort to upgrade DCPS, including the cost and anticipated timeline of the project, and efforts by SSA to engage stakeholders, including any barriers to implementation.

Disability Hearings Backlog.-The agreement encourages SSA to include comprehensive information in its existing reports to Congress on the specific policies SSA has implemented, or has considered, to streamline the disability determination and adjudication process. When considering or implementing changes, SSA should ensure due process, and that applicants have a full and adequate opportunity to present their claims.

Field Office Closures.-While SSA's Inspector General reviews decisions to close field offices, the Commissioner is strongly encouraged to take every action possible to maintain operations at the offices under review. SSA is expected to support front line operations. As part of the fiscal year 2021 Congressional Justification, SSA should include a plan to identify opportunities for improved field office operations. Finally, SSA is strongly encouraged to ensure its policies and procedures for closing field offices include at least 120 days advance notice to the public, SSA employees, Congress, and other stakeholders. Such notice should include a rationale for the proposed closure and an evaluation of the effects on the public and SSA operations.

Mail and Printing Systems.-SSA is encouraged to consider and evaluate modernization of its mail and printing systems and contracts that could result in budgetary savings while improving fraud prevention. The agreement requests a briefing for the Committees within 180 days of enactment of this Act on current mailing and printing systems and contracts, including systems or contracts relating to Social Security Cards, and any ongoing efforts to modernize or otherwise improve such systems.

Medical Vocational Guidelines.-The agreement directs SSA to provide a report to the Committees within 90 days of enactment of this Act on its plan and timetable for updating and modernizing medical vocational guidelines and to engage appropriate Committees of jurisdiction prior to making any changes to such guidelines.

Telework.-SSA is urged to develop a telework plan for Operations employees as quickly as practicable and to brief the Committees on the status of efforts to reinstate telework within 60 days of enactment of this Act.

Video Hearings.-The agreement reiterates the language included under this heading in House Report 116-62, and directs SSA to provide an update in the fiscal year 2021 Congressional Justification detailing the extent to which SSA meets best practices outlined by the Administrative Conference of the U.S., and the extent to which SSA video hearings, policies, and practices are accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) and Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS).-The agreement includes \$23,000,000 for WIPA and \$7,000,000 for PABSS.

FY 2020 Pay Raise

The spending agreement includes language that would provide federal employees with a 2.6% across-the-board increase, along with an average 0.5% increase in locality pay. This is consistent with the language included by the House earlier this year as part of their FY 2020 Financial Services and General Government appropriations measure. The Senate's version was silent on employee compensation, effectively endorsing President Trump's proposed increase of a 2.6% across-the-board increase with no increase in locality pay.

FY 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)

The FY 2020 NDAA passed the House last week by a vote of 377-48. The Senate is expected to pass the legislation this week (floor time is scheduled for today) and President Trump has already indicated he will sign the bill. The agreement includes 12 weeks of paid parental leave for federal employees. Of note, the agreement also contains a provision that provides a technical correction to an authority granted by Congress last year providing expedited hiring authority for post-secondary students. We are working with other organizations to encourage the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to move quickly to

finalize regulations and develop additional implementing guidance for agencies. We will continue to provide updates.

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