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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6200

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September 12, 2012

The Honorable Michael J. Astrue
Social Security Commissioner
Social Security Administration
6401 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21235-6401

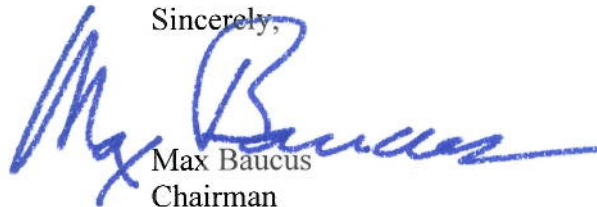
Dear Commissioner Astrue,

As you know, I believe that the Social Security Administration's budget should be at an amount that allows SSA to provide good customer service as well as fulfill its responsibilities to save taxpayer dollars. Good customer service means that my constituents in Montana and across the country receive the benefits they have earned in a timely manner. Saving taxpayer dollars means benefits only go to those who are eligible by reviewing beneficiaries' status periodically. Two very different budgets for the Social Security Administration have recently been approved by Committees in the House and in the Senate. The Senate budget provides SSA with \$11.7 billion, which includes \$1 billion for beneficiary reviews. The House bill provides SSA with \$10.7 billion, with only \$272 million for beneficiary reviews.

Please tell me how the Social Security Administration's work would be affected if the budget approved by the House Committee rather than the budget approved by the Senate Committee was enacted into law. For example, how would the average time it takes individuals to receive benefits at both the initial and appeals levels be affected? How would the hours that the agency staff is available to work with the public be changed, including closing some offices altogether and potential furloughs? What would happen to SSA's ability to detect and prevent fraud? How would the number of beneficiary reviews be affected and what would be the long-term impact on the federal budget?

I know you share my concerns and want SSA to provide the best service possible and be a good steward of taxpayer dollars. Thank you in advance for your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Max Baucus
Chairman