



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON

Finance

SENATOR CHUCK GRASSLEY, OF IOWA - CHAIRMAN

<http://finance.senate.gov>

MEMORANDUM

To: Reporters and Editors
Re: Social Security disability programs report
Da: Friday, Nov. 3, 2006

Sen. Chuck Grassley, chairman of the Committee on Finance, with jurisdiction over Social Security, today highlighted the release of a report by the Government Accountability Office entitled, "Social Security Disability Programs: Clearer Guidance Could Help SSA Apply the Medical Improvement Standard More Consistently, GAO-07-8, October 2006" (available at www.gao.gov). Grassley requested the report to assist the Finance Committee with its oversight responsibilities of the programs within its jurisdiction.

Under current law, the Social Security Administration conducts periodic reviews of disabled beneficiaries to determine their continued eligibility for monthly cash benefits. These periodic reviews include an assessment of the beneficiary's current medical condition. Those found to have improved enough to work are removed from the program.

GAO found inconsistent application of the medical improvement standard, general confusion over the statutory exceptions, and inadequate documentation of eligibility decisions. As a result, GAO recommended that the Social Security Administration provide additional training and guidance to key personnel involved in the disability review process. Grassley made the following comment on the report.

"The findings of this report raise troubling questions about the consistency and fairness of the disability review process. SSA should take immediate steps to implement GAO's recommendations."