

# NOMINATION OF MARTIN J. O'MALLEY

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HEARING  
BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
UNITED STATES SENATE  
ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS  
FIRST SESSION  
ON THE  
NOMINATION OF  
MARTIN J. O'MALLEY, TO BE COMMISSIONER,  
SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

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NOVEMBER 2, 2023

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Printed for the use of the Committee on Finance

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U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

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**NOMINATION OF MARTIN J. O'MALLEY,  
TO BE COMMISSIONER,  
SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION**

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2023**

U.S. SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE,  
*Washington, DC.*

The hearing was convened, pursuant to notice, at 10:03 a.m., in room SD-215, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Ron Wyden (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Cantwell, Menendez, Carper, Cardin, Brown, Bennet, Casey, Whitehouse, Hassan, Cortez Masto, Crapo, Grassley, Cornyn, Thune, Daines, Young, and Blackburn.

Also present: Democratic staff: Sam Conchuratt, Professional Staff Member; Joshua Sheinkman, Staff Director; Tiffany Smith, Deputy Staff Director and Chief Counsel; and Ryder Tobin, Senior Investigative Counsel and Nominations Advisor. Republican staff: Becky Cole, Chief Economist; Gregg Richard, Staff Director; and Lara Rosner, Social Security Policy Advisor.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. RON WYDEN, A U.S. SENATOR  
FROM OREGON, CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

The CHAIRMAN. The Finance Committee will come to order. This morning, we are meeting to consider the nomination of Governor Martin O'Malley to be Commissioner of the Social Security Administration. Before we get to Governor O'Malley though, I am going to introduce the beloved Senator, Barbara Mikulski.

She and I served together, and she would often point to herself and point to me and would say something along the lines of "great to see you" to the guest. "I'm the short of it," she would say, and then she would look up at me and go, "He's the tall of it." [Laughter.]

Senator Mikulski, you are going to get a formal introduction in a few minutes from your Senator from Maryland, but let me start first. You might say I was tall and you were short, but for all of us here in the Senate, you are the giant. You are the giant, and let us give her a big round of applause.

[Applause.]

The CHAIRMAN. What an extraordinary record Senator Mikulski has achieved in both the Senate and the House, and we are going to hear from her momentarily. Governor O'Malley, you are going to have to try to compete with this. This is going to be a challenge, but you have had a life of public service, and you have built a

world-class reputation for harnessing technology to deliver transformative change in government.

As Mayor of Baltimore, you established the Nation's first 311 call center; very important. You helped people shop for services. You threw open the doors of government, and that is why none of us were surprised that the President nominated you to serve, because it is that kind of leadership that is needed at Social Security.

This is a program that is a lifeline for millions of Americans. This is how I got my start in public service, as Senator Mikulski knows, when I was director of the Gray Panthers. This is an incredibly important program to help people with disabilities, surviving spouses, other Americans who earn benefits with every paycheck.

Now, it is no secret that the Social Security Administration has had its share of challenges, from long lines stretching around field offices, phone systems crashing, outdated technology systems, and most recently low staff morale. There have been a lot of criticisms, and a lot of colleagues here in the Senate are talking about it, and we want to make some real changes.

That said, we have the power of the purse and the pen, and we can take responsibility as well for Social Security's performance—and work with the person who fills the job that you have been nominated for to really get solutions to these concerns that our constituents are talking about.

It is not surprising that customer service and staff morale improved as funding levels rose. It is also not surprising that backlogs and wait times grew as funding levels fell. Social Security's budget has been through the ringer over the last decade. Since 2010, the budget has fallen by 17 percent, while the number of beneficiaries has risen by 20 percent. So, if you look at the Social Security Administration, it is trying to do more with less money.

Now, we can talk about all these numbers, but what this really means is parents and grandparents and folks with disabled children, they are waiting months, if not years, to get a decision on disability. Social Security's dedicated employees get overworked and burned out. They have, based on what we have seen, left to go work elsewhere.

Every single member on this dais has talked about how important Social Security is to their constituents, and the message from this committee is that we should never cut benefits. That is something I agree with. Every American who has worked their whole life and paid into Social Security deserves platinum-level service. Well, what we have seen is that, because of cuts to Social Security, that has not always been the case.

Now, in addition to the agency's funding challenges, we have our constituents coming to us with concerns that are not from Capitol hearing rooms, but from their own lives. Here is an example. I have a constituent in Albany, OR who receives Social Security SSI benefits—Supplemental Security Income benefits—because of a severe disability, and she lives in her parents' home.

Although she is unable to work because of her disability, she still has paid half of her SSI benefit to her parents each month as rent. However, Social Security notified her recently that she owes the government more than \$9,000 in overpaid benefits. It spans several

years, because Social Security determined she received a rental subsidy from her parents. That is considered income under the Social Security Act.

My staff has worked with her. She tried to appeal the overpayment, but so far, her appeal has been denied, and the reason is, the law is clear on it. So this constituent is being punished because her parents lent a helping hand to their child. Now, the agency has made notable strides to simplify SSI rules, including those related to housing support.

But they are still hanging on, they are still tethered to some outdated laws. So I and several members of this committee have, on a bipartisan basis, joined Senator Brown and Senator Cassidy to champion bipartisan legislation to modernize SSI to make it easier for the beneficiaries to work, to save, to marry, and to simplify the program and reduce these overpayments. I am very proud to be supporting this bipartisan legislation that will speak to my constituents, whether they are in Albany, OR or anywhere else.

And I am going to close with this: Social Security is at an inflection point. We can keep relying on these policies from yesteryear—that is one route. Congress is good at doing that, you know: let us just keep doing what we are doing. Or we can renew the program so that we can really achieve the kind of quality services that seniors, disabled folks, all these people walking on an economic tightrope, deserve. I believe, Governor O'Malley—having spent a lot of time talking with you, having listened to Senator Mikulski talk about your background—I think you are a person who can help restore the incredible promise of Social Security.

So, we look forward to hearing from you. We are now going to hear from Senator Crapo, and then for the genuine, regulation introduction, we will go to Senator Cardin, and then we will hear from Senator Mikulski.

Senator Crapo?

[The prepared statement of Chairman Wyden appears in the appendix.]

#### **OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MIKE CRAPO, A U.S. SENATOR FROM IDAHO**

Senator CRAPO. Thank you, Senator Wyden. And, Governor O'Malley, congratulations on your nomination, and thank you for your willingness to serve.

When we met, you asked me what I wanted of you, and I did not tell you we wanted you to change all of these policy problems, because that is not your job. It would not be your job as the Social Security Commissioner. I asked you to make sure the trains run on time, and to fix and simplify the system. That can be done administratively. I appreciate your willingness to address those kinds of issues.

This nomination is long overdue, coming more than 2 years after President Biden removed the prior Senate-confirmed Commissioner. During this time, the Social Security Administration has struggled to fulfill its customer service mission.

The Social Security Administration is responsible for overseeing the Social Security program, which provides more than \$1 trillion in benefits to millions of seniors, individuals with disabilities, and

their families every year. The SSA also administers the Supplemental Security Income program, which Senator Wyden has referenced, assigns Social Security numbers, and issues Social Security cards. Given the SSA's important responsibilities, the public rightly expects the agency to provide timely and responsive service. However, SSA is not currently living up to those expectations.

For Fiscal Year 2023, Americans waited more than 7 months on average for a disability decision at the initial level. For those denied at the initial level, they waited another 7 months at the reconsideration level, and another nearly 15 months if they sought a hearing before an administrative law judge.

While not all applicants will qualify for disability benefits, they all deserve to receive a decision within a reasonable period of time. The Social Security Administration must take additional steps to reduce wait times for disability decisions, and address outdated disability program rules.

SSA's national 800 number is one of the primary channels for seeking assistance from the agency, and it must do more to address wait times. In Fiscal Year 2023, callers to the national 800 number waited more than 35 minutes on average to speak with a representative, compared to approximately 13 minutes 2 years ago, and around 10 minutes a decade ago. SSA should also continue improving its online services, which not only increase flexibility for beneficiaries, but also allow the agency to be more efficient with its resources.

Americans rightly expect that the Social Security Administration will be a responsible steward of taxpayer funds. However, for Fiscal Year 2021, the SSA issued approximately \$2.49 billion in improper payments for Social Security, and \$4.91 billion for SSI. The agency has additional tools to prevent improper payments before they occur, and the agency should use them.

Finally, while the President and Congress are tasked with ensuring Social Security's long-term solvency, the SSA plays a critical role in making sure that the administration, Congress, and the public have accurate and timely information about the program's long-term finances.

This year, for the first time in over a decade, the Social Security trustees report was delivered to Congress by the statutory April 1st deadline. I expect a new Commissioner to help ensure that the trustees report deadline is treated as a deadline, not a suggestion.

Governor O'Malley, if confirmed, you will face immense challenges and a relatively short time line to get the Social Security Administration back on track. This may all be a tall order, but the American people deserve nothing less.

I look forward to hearing your testimony and responses to questions today, so that we can better understand how you would evaluate and address SSA's customer service challenges; what specific data you would look at to evaluate the use of telework; how you would ensure that the SSA's independent status is maintained in practice; and what would be your top areas of focus with respect to modernizing SSA's information technology.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, and thank you again, Governor O'Malley, for being willing to take on this task.



[The prepared statement of Senator Crapo appears in the appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Crapo.

Now we are going to hear from Senator Mikulski, and that is because of the graciousness of your colleague from Maryland, Senator Cardin. He looked over at me and said, "Senator Mikulski first." So, Senator, wonderful to have you. Please proceed.

**STATEMENT OF HON. BARBARA MIKULSKI,  
A FORMER U.S. SENATOR FROM MARYLAND**

Senator MIKULSKI. Mr. Chairman and Senator Cardin, thank you for your graciousness, as always. But, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member Senator Crapo, thank you very much for inviting me to appear before the Finance Committee on the nomination of Martin O'Malley.

Why am I here to testify? Well, this is my first time back in Dirksen in 5 years, because of COVID and other dynamics. But I also believe when you hang it up, do not hang around. But I wanted to come here today at your invitation, Mr. Chairman, with the concurrence of the ranking member, to introduce and talk about my knowledge of the nominee, Governor Martin O'Malley, and also because of the hometown pride we feel in the Social Security Administration.

We in Maryland have a lot of home-state pride to have the Social Security Administration headquartered in Maryland, where it has been for 88 years since Social Security was originally passed with the work of the Congress, working with the President.

We have a lot of pride in this where, as I said, first in downtown—the city of Baltimore—and then in Woodlawn. Back in the 1930s, when people were choking in the Dust Bowl or not working in the Rust Bowl, Americans needed a safety net, and that is when Social Security was created.

For 88 years, the Social Security Administration did not miss a payment, but it is in much need of management reform. The chairman, the ranking member, others, have catalogued all of the constituent delivery services that are so familiar to this committee, and the due diligence you are applying to fix it.

But so many Americans depend on their Social Security, not only as a lifeline, but a life preserver that keeps them afloat. The challenges of the Social Security Administration are vast, but the hard-working men and women of the Social Security Administration need a strong, confirmed operational leader, and the American people need a Social Security Administration that works for them.

That is why I believe that Martin O'Malley will provide the leadership and the management skills to do that. I have known Governor O'Malley personally for more than 3 decades. Actually, I knew him when he had more law books than ties. When I ran for the Senate so many years ago in 1987, I recruited Martin O'Malley to be my field director.

He was a law student. He was a brilliant organizer. He helped me win, and then I went on to govern. Martin O'Malley also chose a life of service. Service is in Governor O'Malley's DNA. His father was a strong personality who went into service; his mother worked

in constituent services for me for a number of years. His wife is a district court judge.

He went to schools like Gonzaga and Catholic U that reinforced again the ethic of service to people and making the world a better place. So Martin O'Malley ran for the Baltimore City Council. I served there too. In Baltimore, we call it the Pothole Parliament, because you have to really worry about the nuts and bolts of delivering service. Then he became Mayor.

Well, when he became Mayor, people wondered whether he was going to—he has a flare, a public flare, a persona. He sings, he plays the guitar, but he is also an excellent manager. So people wondered was Martin O'Malley going to be a showboat? But guess what? He turned out to be a tugboat.

He actually moved the ship of state in the right direction, often pulling it against its will. He had a knack for organization, understanding the new technology and how to use technology to be data-driven, metric-assessed, to use that technology to motivate, not to castigate the employees to do a better job.

Now, Governor O'Malley is not a big government guy. He is a smart government guy. He believes you use modern management tools to organize a workforce around a mission, measurable objectives, and also stay within the budget and on line. In Baltimore, in the City Council, we had to have a balanced budget. You could not just run your agency on, you know, make-believe.

When you are the Governor of the State of Maryland, again, there is a constitutional mandate to pass a balanced budget. So the Governor, Governor O'Malley, knows how to work within budgetary lines, master technology using data, metrics, and so on, to deploy the right resources to the right people to do the job, and then really measure—measure—performance to not castigate but to motivate.

Using that, I believe, is what Social Security needs now. Social Security does need a seasoned leader, and Martin O'Malley would be one that would provide that. As I said, we take great pride in the Social Security Administration there. The workers are really overwhelmed. The technology is really dated. The facilities are pretty tired, as are often the workers.

And then you outlined, Mr. Chairman and others, really what constituents are facing and so on. So this is why I think that he brings the commitment to service, the skill set to do that job, a sense of fiscal responsibility, and an understanding that Congress makes the policy; the administrator implements it following the law and congressional intent.

So, I really think Governor O'Malley will do that job, and I commend him to you for your consideration in the due diligence you apply on all nominees.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Senator Mikulski appears in the appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator.

Governor, what a send-off. That was Exhibit A of a complimentary and richly deserved send-off. And I will only tell you, my mother used to say after a basketball game, "Dear, just make sure you are out there running with the right crowd."

When you are with Senator Mikulski, you are running with the right crowd. You are a lucky fellow.

All right. Senator Cardin?

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN,  
A U.S. SENATOR FROM MARYLAND**

Senator CARDIN. Senator Wyden, Senator Crapo, thank you very much for holding this hearing for Governor O'Malley's nomination, and thank you for inviting back Barbara Mikulski. Team Maryland is having a reunion. Barbara was the founder and leader of Team Maryland. That is where we worked with Governor O'Malley and Mayor O'Malley, and we worked together as a team.

And thank you for having Senator Mikulski back so we could all update our book on the Mikulski one-liners. You've got some fresh new one-liners. We appreciate that very much, Barb.

Senator MIKULSKI. I have had a long time to think about them.

Senator CARDIN. So, I have known Governor O'Malley—I knew him when he was a city councilperson and took on some incredible challenges in Baltimore City. I knew him when he was Mayor of Baltimore, and had a chance to see him take on some of the toughest challenges that we have ever seen, including public safety, our schools—just incredible challenges with limited resources.

I have seen him as Governor of Maryland, where he excelled in really bringing our State together, and encompassing so much as Governor. I have known him as a friend; I have known him as a public servant. And, Governor O'Malley, you were trained very well by Senator Mikulski, and we appreciate that.

There is not a challenge that he will back away from; I can tell you that personally. He will take on any challenge. And I just want to share with you, I was at City Hall when Governor O'Malley set up CitiStat. This was a novel approach I had never seen really carried out by a chief executive of a city.

He had ways in which he brought his agency heads in on a regular basis, with specific objectives that they needed to accomplish: it may have been to reduce the delays on some city services; it might have been to deal with the maintenance of our streets. And then on a regular basis, he had the stats to see whether they were performing as they should. That is called accountability.

He held his team accountable, and the results were just incredible. I saw him with StateStat, as he transitioned from city government to the State government. He is an incredible manager, which is exactly what the Social Security Administration needs.

He will do what is necessary in order, Senator Crapo, to get the trains running on time, because that is exactly what we need to make sure happens. So let me just quote from the former Mayor of Indianapolis and the current director of the Kennedy School of Government, Steve Goldsmith, and what he said about Governor O'Malley. "There are leaders who will charismatically rally the city, those who work well with communities, those who can manage well, and those who lead well. But what Martin O'Malley brings in person is the full complement of those skills."

I think that really tells us the talent that we have before us who is willing to take on this challenge at the Social Security Administration. This is a critically important agency. Sixty-six million

Americans, one out of every five, depend upon the benefits and services of the Social Security Administration. And it is personal to me, because I am one of those 66 million. So we all recognize how important this is.

I want to thank you, Martin O'Malley, for being willing to take on this challenge. Thank you for your life service, public service. Thank you, Katie and the entire family, because we know the family is in on all of this. And I hope, Mr. Chairman, that we can hear from Governor O'Malley, consider his nomination quickly, and approve him so he can get to work.

The CHAIRMAN. Well said, Senator Cardin, and good luck, Governor, trying to match all of this. Senator Mikulski, Senator Cardin, it has been quite a beginning. And, Senator Mikulski, you are always welcome. You are welcome to stay, and we know also that you have a very busy schedule teaching at Johns Hopkins. So, if you need to go to your students, we understand.

Senator MIKULSKI. Mr. Chairman, Senator Crapo, I would like to extend, if I could, a word of "hello" to my friend Senator Grassley. I did not have a chance to greet him or you, Senator Cornyn. Good to say "hi."

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Mikulski. Okay.

[Applause.]

The CHAIRMAN. All right. We are going to move along, just as Senator Cardin recommended, and next we will hear from Governor O'Malley.

**STATEMENT OF HON. MARTIN J. O'MALLEY, NOMINATED TO  
BE COMMISSIONER, SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION,  
BALTIMORE, MD**

Governor O'MALLEY. Chairman Wyden, thank you very, very much. Ranking Member Crapo, members of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing. I am going to ask you to indulge me on a couple of really essential other "thank you"s, and that is, thank you to Senator Ben Cardin, and also thank you, former Senator Barbara Mikulski, two of the most outstanding United States Senators that our State has ever sent to Washington, and that is saying a lot, because Maryland, in addition to crab cakes and football, produces outstanding United States Senators.

I want to thank you both for your leadership and what you have done for America and also for the people of Maryland. I want to thank President Biden for his trust in me. And finally I want to thank my wife, Judge Katie Curran O'Malley, and my children, Grace and Tara and William and Jack, for their steadfast support in this challenge and indeed every call to public service that our family has answered.

When I was a boy, I was taught by my parents—who were themselves children of the Depression, young people who were tested in their service in the second World War—that the greatness of our country is found in the care and concern we show for one another, especially people who are sick, people who are elderly and living alone, people living with disabilities, children, each of them our neighbor, who would otherwise go hungry.

Social Security is the most far-reaching and important act of social and economic justice that the people of the United States of

America have ever enacted for one another. For tens of millions of Americans across our country, Social Security today is the difference between living with dignity or living in poverty. And for a remarkable 88 years, as Senator Mikulski mentioned, without ever missing a single benefit payment, Social Security has strived to provide the right amount to the right person at the right time—and I might add, at a massive scale. And for the long arc of its history, Social Security has done so with a high degree of accuracy.

But today, for all of its historic strengths, we must acknowledge that Social Security faces a customer service crisis. The truth is today, the Social Security Administration is serving 50 percent more customers and beneficiaries with the same staffing it had 28 years ago in 1995.

In fact, last year was a 25-year low in Social Security staffing. What does that mean? That means that today, a senior citizen who calls the 800 number of the Social Security Administration will face an average hold time of 37 long minutes. Today, an American in need of disability benefits will wait 220 days for an initial disability determination, and perhaps as long as 2 years for the successive mandatory appeals.

This is not the greatness of America. This is not acceptable. If someone wants a face-to-face meeting with a Social Security employee in a field office to claim their benefits, they should be able to get one. If you are a person already living with a severe disability, you should not have to be dragged through 2 years of so-called due process in order to receive the benefits for which you have already spent a lifetime working. We can and we must do better, as an agency and as a Nation.

President Biden nominated me for this position because I have the leadership skills, the management skills, and the experience needed at this moment to lead Social Security forward. As a Mayor, I learned there is no Democratic or Republican way to fill a pothole, and as the Governor I learned that the biggest and toughest challenges can only be tackled with some degree of bipartisan consensus and cooperation.

But as both a Mayor and a Governor, I developed a discipline—tipped to it by smarter and far more experienced people than I. I developed a discipline for harnessing data and information technologies in ways that got the best out of large, siloed organizations, of people that many inside and outside of government thought were too unwieldy, too slow, or too steeped in excuses to change.

Despite the challenges the agency faces, I have no doubt whatsoever that the dedicated, patriotic, and hardworking men and women of the Social Security Administration of the United States of America are up to this moment, and so am I.

With your consent and confirmation, it would be the honor of a lifetime to lead Social Security's outstanding public servants forward together in such an important mission, and it would be an enormous privilege and honor to be able to make sure that each of you is provided with, as our Nation's policymakers, the very best information you need to make the decisions necessary for the long-term sustainability and strength of Social Security.

And so, with deep humility, I look forward to receiving your advice. I greatly appreciate the time that so many of you have made

available to see me in your offices, and I look forward to answering your questions today and hopefully earning your consent.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Governor O'Malley appears in the appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Governor O'Malley. We have some obligatory questions, and then we will get into the questions from members. First Governor, is there anything that you are aware of in your background that might present a conflict of interest with the duties of the office to which you have been nominated?

Governor O'MALLEY. No, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Second, do you know of any reason, personal or otherwise, that would in any way prevent you from fully and honorably discharging the responsibilities of the office to which you have been nominated?

Governor O'MALLEY. No sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Third, do you agree, without reservation, to respond to any reasonable summons to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Congress if you are confirmed?

Governor O'MALLEY. Yes, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Finally, do you commit to providing a prompt response in writing to any questions addressed to you by any Senator of this committee?

Governor O'MALLEY. Yes sir.

The CHAIRMAN. We appreciate your responses, Governor. Now we are going to go to member questions. Let me tell you what is on my mind, Governor, because this is what members have asked me about your nomination. You have, through much of your adult life, held political office: Mayor, Governor. You were a candidate for President of the United States.

This position that you have been nominated for is not about politics. It is not about politics at all. It is about service. It is about service to the millions of people whom we have been talking about. How do you feel about this transition to a position that is all about service?

Governor O'MALLEY. Well, what you just laid out is what made me excited to say "yes," and I did not hesitate for an instant. I was honored, as you mentioned, to have been able to run for office and to serve in elected office.

But I was also—I cannot—how do I say this? I do not miss a lot of the aspects of running for office, and I have an enormous amount of respect for all of you who nonetheless grind yourself through what is required: you know, the time on the phone, the time balancing duties here and duties at home.

What excites me about this challenge is that it is all about operations. It is all about improving customer service. And quite honestly, after being a Mayor and being a Governor, the one piece of it that I really truly do miss—well, there are a couple. But one that I really, truly miss is pulling people together around the data, the information—you know, being in the center of the huddle, running plays, measuring yardage, seeing if what we are doing is actually working to improve customer service.

That is what I was able to do with a dedicated group of people in the city of Baltimore, and that is what we did when I was Gov-

ernor. And I believe that Social Security has a much higher velocity of change that it is capable of than what we have seen so far.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, you get high marks for your management record. People referred that to us again and again when they said, "Look at the Governor's record in terms of management." What do you think are your key strengths in the management area?

Governor O'MALLEY. Senator, I would say that the key strength is—you know, I have learned and I have taught in a number of universities, courses in public administration. An older Jesuit friend of mine said, "You really do not know what you know until you try to teach it a few times."

I believe some of the most important lessons I learned as a manager, and the things that we put into practice, involved really bringing people together in a much more regular—every 2 weeks, every 2 weeks, every 2 weeks—cadence of accountability and collaboration, to ask one overriding question, and that is, are the things we are doing working or not?

If they were working, we came back 2 weeks later to try to do more of them. If they were not working, we shifted tactics, shifted strategies. What I have seen across the country is a tendency that most governments have to fall into an annual cadence called "budget inputs."

But once you create a winnable game with a compelling scoreboard—and this is more important the larger the agency is. It is amazing how people start to lean forward, how people start to play differently, how people have a much easier time remembering what they committed to their colleagues over the last 2 weeks, and what they committed to do in the next 2 weeks, than they do remembering last year's budget.

So that is what I learned: bring people together every 2 weeks, every 2 weeks, measure performance, and lift up the leaders in the eyes of their peers.

The CHAIRMAN. I like the accountability that you have described. That is very constructive.

One last question in my round. Let's talk about reducing overpayments. And I remember back in the days when I ran the legal aid program for senior citizens at home, we saw how important it was that Social Security pay the right person the right amount at the right time, because if you do not get that right, it causes bedlam so often in the lives of people you are serving who are walking on an economic tightrope. And they've got to get the amount right, because it could be rent, it could be groceries, it could be gas.

It is imperative that Social Security get this right, and there has been a real challenge in terms of the red tape and the follow-through, that frankly is one of the things I like so much about your candidacy. For example, in 2015 a bipartisan group worked to pass legislation to create a data exchange that would significantly reduce overpayments for seniors and disabled folks. Eight years later—what seems like an eternity to people who are trying to get this stuff sorted out—it is still not online, and the longer Social Security drags its feet, the more seniors and disabled folks are going to get hurt.

So my question here is, if confirmed, will you give this committee—all of us will share in on a bipartisan basis—a concrete

timetable on the system's implementation? And we would ask that we could have that timetable for getting it done within 30 days after you have been confirmed.

Governor O'MALLEY. Well, of course, Senator. There are so many things I am looking forward to drawing myself into, but it breaks my heart when I hear stories like the one that you just shared from Oregon. A woman just suddenly finds she has to pay \$9,000 back, and this is somebody living on SSI.

Timely, accurate information shared by all is the key to more effectively serving people and to higher and better collaboration.

The CHAIRMAN. Very good.

Senator Crapo?

Senator CRAPO. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And, Governor O'Malley, I was very heartened by your opening statement. I appreciated the fact that you candidly acknowledge that the Social Security system is not where it ought to be in a number of areas. You heard me outline some of them. You outlined some of them. You have heard others today as well.

And I heard you say that you feel that there's a way to get the Social Security Administration to perform at its peak and best levels, and I appreciate that. You know today, in the United States, I think that people have a feeling about government agencies in general, not just the Social Security Administration, but maybe the words "government bureaucracy" symbolize what people think. Or maybe the notion, well, that is good enough for government work—a comment you have probably heard before, this notion that we just are not getting performance from, not only the Social Security Administration, but from pretty much any government bureaucratic agency today.

We have concerns about every one of them not performing the tasks that they need to perform and doing them efficiently and at a high-caliber standard. If you are confirmed, what would be your top areas of focus with respect to making sure that the Social Security Administration performed at that peak level that it ought to be performing at, for customer service?

Governor O'MALLEY. Senator, I believe the top priority is to—as large as Social Security is, there are lagging indicators that are pretty clear that we have to meet. But what is not as clear are the measurements on the tactics and strategies and actions that will drive you to the lagging indicators.

In other words, people can gather around the table every month and stare at the hold times on the 800 number or the backlog and shake their heads and wag fingers, but that is not what is going to improve it. You have to actually measure the leading actions. In my advice that I have provided to other Mayors and Governors across the country—you know, everybody wants the dashboard on the end indicators.

But what we really need are leaders that bring people together to ask the questions about whether the actions, tactics, and strategies are driving us there. That is what we need to do at Social Security—and I will stop there.

Senator CRAPO. Well, thank you. You actually anticipated my second question, because I was going to ask you, how do you measure this? How are you going to measure this and get to the objec-



tives? I look forward to seeing how you approach this, and maybe that can be in this 30-day report that Senator Wyden asked you about—

The CHAIRMAN. Very good.

Senator CRAPO [continuing]. To give us some ideas about that.

For my last question, I would like to talk to you about information technology investments. The Social Security Administration's information technology plays a critical role in the agency's ability to serve the public. While SSA has taken steps to modernize its IT, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done to reduce its reliance on legacy systems and increase online service offerings.

If confirmed, what would be your top areas of focus with respect to modernizing the SSA's information technology?

Governor O'MALLEY. Yes. Senator, we need to bring in the best people, not only across our Federal Government—like the U.S. Digital Service—but we need to be open to the private sector and the things they are already doing that we can learn from.

I will need to do a rapid assessment of systems, the alignment of those systems. And in doing so, there are two people who are going to be in the forefront of my mind: first, the customer. So, a customer-centered approach: how is the customer being served? And directly related to that, what is the experience of the front-line worker? I have heard stories about SSA waiting years and years for some minimal viable product to finally roll out, only to have the workers be demoralized and throw up their hands and say, "This does not work for us. It adds more time for us."

So I am looking forward to sitting down beside those workers. You know, one of the important things to remember as an executive is, your job is not to have all the answers. Your job is to listen to the people who do, at least when it comes to the things that they do.

Related to the technology data system assessments, I think it is really, really important to have a robust IV&V contractor looking over the shoulder. Not somebody who is friends with the prime, but to do the independent verification and validation, so that we do not have the overruns, the delays.

Senator CRAPO. Thank you.

Governor O'MALLEY. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Very logical. There is not enough logic around here. Thank you.

Senator Grassley is next.

Senator GRASSLEY. When you came to my office, I wouldn't ask you any "gotcha" questions unless I was going to do that here. So I hope these are legitimate approaches to things.

The Social Security Administration was reestablished as an independent agency under President Clinton. In 1994, Senator Moynihan argued making the system an independent agency would help "insulate the program from partisan politics." I have three questions, but just consider them as one question.

Should you be confirmed as Commissioner, will you commit to keeping the SSA insulated from politics and not taking positions on political issues or initiatives? I ask this question because your predecessor was fired for politics. So what does "independent" mean to you vis-à-vis your relationship with President Biden?

Governor O'MALLEY. Senator, I have read, actually, the statute that made it an independent agency. I think there has been some creative tension between Social Security being an independent agency operating above politics, if you will, or without regard to the politics, and what the Supreme Court has said is the prerogative of any elected executive to have and appoint their own Cabinet members.

For my part, as I look at this duty, I believe first and foremost I have a responsibility to advocate for the agency, to advocate for the long-term health and well-being of that agency; and second, to make sure that each member of this committee, and indeed any member of Congress, is provided with reliable data and accurate evidence so that you can make the policy while, in the words of the minority leader, I make the trains run on time.

Senator GRASSLEY. Can I concentrate just a little bit on that last point, your relationship with the President, being an independent agency, as Senator Moynihan indicated?

Governor O'MALLEY. And, Senator, I mean, I am certainly here because President Biden nominated me. I have known him for many years, worked with him—and some of you—on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act—

Senator GRASSLEY. Well then, in light of the fact that your predecessor was fired for politics—

Governor O'MALLEY. Senator, I never had met that gentleman, and I was not involved in the administration at that time. I received a call earlier in this year, and the White House asked me if I would be willing to take on this big challenge, and I said “yes.”

I think others might be able to unpack more of the constitutional law and the Supreme Court rulings on those things, but I think that the head of Social Security has to realize that she or he is heading an entity that Congress intends to be independent, even if the Supreme Court says the President has his prerogatives in choosing Cabinet members.

Senator GRASSLEY. Every year, the Social Security Board of Trustees urges lawmakers to act sooner rather than later to shore up the trust fund. As Commissioner, what would you see as your role in addressing Social Security's long-term solvency, or would that be no role whatsoever, since it is up to Congress to make the decision?

Governor O'MALLEY. Senator, thank you. There is an urgent crisis that we face now of customer service, but there is one over the horizon with regard to solvency. This is how I would see my role in that, and that would be to be an effective administrator, executing the will of the President of the United States and Congress, improving services to people.

But one aspect of this job is making sure that you get the best numbers that you can possibly get on the policy options before you, in that solvency debate. In other words—Senator Cassidy and I had some time to talk, and he used the analogy of dials. He said we need to have an evidence-based conversation about what the value of each of those dials is, as we look to restore solvency. So policy, Senator, is your prerogative. I would not step on that prerogative.

I will defend the agency, and most importantly, I will make sure you get the evidence and the numbers you need to evaluate what is best for the people over the long haul.

Senator GRASSLEY. This will be my last question. One item that is sorely in need of updating is the official jobs listing that the Social Security Administration uses to determine if there is a job in the national economy that a disability applicant is able to perform.

The official job listing has not been updated since 1977, and includes jobs that are obsolete in today's economy, while omitting positions that have arisen due to advances in technology. Before I ask my question, outside the fact that this is 40, what 47 years since it has been updated, I do not know how government could be that unreliable in keeping things updated.

But as Commissioner, where would updating the official job listing stand in your list of priorities?

Governor O'MALLEY. It would be a high priority, Senator. I have read some of those stories too, people being told that they can go get a job as a seal killer some place or those other outrageous examples.

If you talk to somebody like, I don't know, some of these search firms that recruit people for jobs, I am quite sure they have a much more extensive and up-to-date list than the Federal Government has, and I would look forward to working with you on that. It would be a high priority.

The CHAIRMAN. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Senator Cornyn is next.

Senator CORNYN. Thank you, Governor, for being willing to take on this challenge. If your job is to make sure the trains are running on time, do you think it is important for us to make sure that there is something in those cars? In other words, Senator Grassley broached the topic of solvency in Social Security.

According to published reports, Social Security will become insolvent by 2033 unless Congress does something different; Medicare will become insolvent by 2031—just to cover a few facts with you. I am sure you are aware of all of this.

Right now, our debt-to-GDP ratio is 100 percent. We spent \$659 billion so far this year just on interest on the debt—\$659 billion just to pay interest to the bondholders in China and Japan and elsewhere around the world. As you know, mandatory spending, which includes Social Security and Medicare, roughly is two-thirds of all Federal spending, so that contributes disproportionately to the debt that I mentioned just a moment ago.

Try as we may, trying to deal with this strictly in discretionary spending—which is one-third of that spending, including the 8 percent that is spent just on interest alone—we cannot get to the balance dealing just with discretionary spending.

Obviously, our goal should be to save Social Security and Medicare and not cut them. You have been in politics a while. You understand what a political football this can be, but at some point, it seems to me that people in politics need to have the courage to speak the truth about where we are and what direction we are heading when it comes to Federal spending.

Right now, we are debating a supplemental appropriation bill—the House is—for Israel, to help them defend their country against

terrorists known as Hamas. We know the President has also requested money for Ukraine, a total of, I think, \$106 billion in supplemental appropriation request.

The President also sent us another \$50-billion domestic supplemental as well. I think you can tell the direction I am heading here, the gist of my concerns. But unless we do something different than we have been doing, we are heading toward a disaster, a disaster for the seniors who depend on Social Security and Medicare, and a disaster for our country, because we will not have the financial ability to actually deal with emergencies like what is happening in Israel, what is happening in Ukraine, and other places around the world.

So do you agree with me that we are heading in a bad direction?

Governor O'MALLEY. I believe the world only spins forward, and I am an optimist, Senator. I believe if I can address directly the Social Security aspect, I mean, I think there are some interesting things.

Senator Cardin will recall the Medicare waiver that we arranged for the State of Maryland. We stopped paying the hospitals as if they were the Marriott Hotel—by how many beds they could fill up—and we have saved the Federal Government a billion dollars.

But to your question about Social Security, this is the beauty of Social Security, that it is a currently funded system. In other words, when people work, they pay into it. A reserve has been built up, and those dollars are dedicated there.

If you were to look at GDP and Social Security's percentage of GDP, it has pretty much clipped along at, I think, 4 percent-ish and is not seeing those sharp spikes, that kind of hockey stick movement that you allude to where health care is concerned.

Senator CORNYN. Is it your understanding that current benefits to Social Security recipients are paid out of the trust fund or those financial transactions on the balance sheet of the Federal Government that essentially add to the national debt?

Governor O'MALLEY. No. It is my position that they are paid by people paying into it. In other words, last year Social Security paid out \$1.24 trillion. They brought in \$1.22 trillion, and then the reserve that had been built up is \$2.83 trillion, so they had to tap that to make up that difference.

So, it is all well, as people anticipated in 1983 when they created some changes to extend solvency.

Senator CORNYN. Do you know what the administration's plan is to save Social Security?

Governor O'MALLEY. No, sir.

Senator CORNYN. Did you talk to the President or any of his advisors about that in your discussions with him about this nomination?

Governor O'MALLEY. Not yet. But I did read and I followed what he said in his presidential campaign, and—

Senator CORNYN. What did you say in *your* presidential campaign about Social Security?

Governor O'MALLEY. I said—

The CHAIRMAN. The time of my colleague has expired, and as we said—

Senator CORNYN. I think he was getting ready to answer my question.

Governor O'MALLEY. I said similar things, and, Senator, I submitted—I am not trying to be coy. I mean, it is in the Senate Finance questionnaire. One of the wonderful questions they ask of somebody who has run for office is, give us everything you have ever published or said online for the last—since getting out of college.

So I do have my position, and I highlighted that one in the first 20 pages that were on that Senate Finance questionnaire. But I do have my position there, and the President's is pretty well-known, I think, his position on solvency.

The CHAIRMAN. The time of my colleague has expired.

I would just say to colleagues on both sides of the aisle, there was a reason that I asked the first question the way I asked it, because this is not a position where you are supposed to do politics. You are supposed to do service.

Senator CORNYN. You said “politics”? Were you suggesting my questions had to do with politics as opposed to policy?

The CHAIRMAN. I am not saying anything, other than there was a reason I asked my question the way I asked it.

Senator CORNYN. Well, Mr. Chairman, I do not accept the fact that you would try to censor members of the Senate asking questions of witnesses during nomination hearings.

The CHAIRMAN. Not only—not only did I not censor my colleague—

Senator CORNYN. I was trying to be respectful of the Governor, and I am confident he will do a good job. I just hope he still has a trust fund to administer.

The CHAIRMAN. Not only did I not censor my colleague, I allowed him extra time to ask his question.

Senator Cardin, you are next.

Senator CARDIN. Senator Cantwell is here.

The CHAIRMAN. Excuse me, Senator Cantwell. We missed you. Apologies.

Senator CANTWELL. Thank you. Thank you, Chair Wyden, and congratulations on your nomination.

Governor O'MALLEY. Thank you, Senator.

Senator CANTWELL. We had a chance to discuss a couple of issues about Social Security in my office, but one of those was about chained CPI, and the notion that sometimes people think that a change to the formula is not a decrease in benefits. So where are you on chained CPI?

Governor O'MALLEY. I believe that was a policy question asked and answered. And if I am not mistaken, I believe that you and Senator Mikulski were both leaders in rejecting that, because it would diminish and weaken Social Security rather than strengthen it for so many people.

Senator CANTWELL. Well, 1.4 million people in Washington State, or 18 percent of our population, rely on these Social Security benefits, and I opposed in 2013 switching to that index calculation, because it would reduce the annual cost-of-living increase for our seniors.

And so, various times, various administrations come in and try to propose this, and I want to make sure that I am on the record making sure that that is not something that you would be for.

Governor O'MALLEY. That is true, yes.

Senator CANTWELL. Thank you so much. And you prioritized financial responsibility during your time as Maryland Governor. What approach do you think we need to continue to focus on here—and you mentioned the communication, to just getting the phones answered, and making sure that we deliver on service. Could you expound on that?

Governor O'MALLEY. Sure, Senator; thank you. Social Security is an organization that is steeped in tradition—very large, serves people on a massive scale. They also happen to have some of the best data and information that other partner agencies—interagencies as well as thousands of people need to ping off that data in order to do their business.

What Social Security has need of is a common operating platform that allows everybody to see what is happening in the organization. Right now, if you look at their org chart, it is massive and it is extremely siloed.

The key to collaboration and improving customer service, as well as efficiency, as well as staying on budget, is to break ourselves out of 240 years of tradition that says, that is my data, that is my budget, or information is to be hoarded, and instead realize that you need to share information openly and transparently.

We need to measure performance. We need to understand what is happening where, whether we are on track or not, who is doing it well, and who is not doing it well. So I think there is enormous opportunity. Part of it is cultural. I do not think it is primarily technology. I think it is many years of being averse to risk, and many years of accepting the wisdom that we do not share things unless we are forced to.

Senator CANTWELL. So, your point though is about efficiency, is about making sure that Social Security does a better job at answering the phones, connecting with people about questions, and resolving problems; is that right?

Governor O'MALLEY. That is right. That is the North Star. We have to improve customer service.

Senator CANTWELL. Well, I will look forward to hearing what technology upgrades you have in mind for that. But we certainly agree with that, and obviously all our offices deal with Social Security issues. And if you think about it, we are dealing with the issues that you have not dealt with, more or less.

So we would definitely appreciate understanding what upgrades you think are necessary.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Governor O'MALLEY. Thank you, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. And so, the nominee knows there is nobody on this committee who knows more about technology than Senator Cantwell, so you will want to work with her.

Senator Cardin, you are next.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just really want to underscore the point that Governor O'Malley's strength is in his ability to administrate. And in response to Senator Cornyn's in-

quiry, I will be interested in reading your answer to that questionnaire, because I know how frank you have been over your career. It is going to be an interesting read.

Let me talk a little bit about the challenges. To me, it is similar to being Mayor of Baltimore, in that the challenges are great, the resources are limited. There are things that you are not going to be able to control. One is whether we pass a budget on time, whether you are operating under a CR, whether you deal with government shutdowns, whether you deal with adequate resources.

These are issues that you have to deal with, and they are not easy to explain to your workforce. You mentioned the workforce in response to one of the questions, I think, from Senator Crapo or Grassley. The Social Security Administration was ranked the second-best place to work a decade ago for an agency that size. It is now dead last. The morale is terrible.

So you have a challenge to get the confidence of your workforce, recognizing the challenges of implementing policies without the resources that in some cases—as you point out, the workforce is wondering what we are doing. So, tell me a little bit about your experiences as a Mayor, how you were able—because the workforce working for Baltimore at that time had real challenges as to whether they were being appreciated.

How do you restore the morale of the workforce so that you can meet the goals that you set for yourself on the service levels that are critically important to me? Tell me a little bit about how you will go about working with the workforce to improve their spirit that they are being appreciated and a part of the team?

Governor O'MALLEY. Senator, thank you. It is remarkable that an agency that had been number 1 in employee morale would be dead last in such a short period of time. You mentioned external events, what I might call the whirlwind, always outside howling at the door. That was certainly true when I was elected Mayor of Baltimore.

And yet running to the scene of every fire, responding to the issue of the day or the shortcoming of the day, the scandal of the day, whatever it is, that does not move the ball down the field. What we learned to do—and what was extremely important to do for employee morale—was to tell people that they actually can achieve, and to start measuring performance, not once a year as part of the inputs of a budget, but every 2 weeks.

And it is amazing. I mean, if you have ever seen a small group of kids on a soccer field, they play differently once you start keeping score—not in a punitive way, but in a way that creates a winnable game for those employees.

I have read so many stories about the numbers of employees of Social Security who report workplace stress; people at Social Security, so many who have gone to seek professional help because of the anxiety and the stress they deal with; sadly, some who have friends who committed suicide, they believe in part because of the stress they experienced at work.

If, at Social Security, we can create routines and disciplines where we regularly—when I say “we,” I mean all of those in a leadership position in the center of that big organization—regularly lis-

ten to the workers on the front lines, we are going to get a lot of good ideas about things that we can improve.

When people are actually listened to, when their word is respected, when their experience is respected and we create a winnable game, it has been my experience, as it was in Baltimore, that people rise to the occasion. I mean, we declared a 48-hour pothole guarantee shortly after I was elected Mayor, and people were like, "Oh, you should not do that. They will never hit it."

But we already knew they were hitting it in 55 hours, and when they saw it publicly, those men and women on those work crews rose to the occasion, and they did it. Small things done well make bigger things possible, and one of the things the Jesuits taught me at Gonzaga is that expectations become behavior.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank my colleague.

Senator Casey?

Senator CASEY. Mr. Chairman, thanks very much. And, Governor, we are honored that you are willing to continue your public service, and I will begin where you left off with the Jesuits. They taught us a lot, and one of the things they taught us was to try to live your life for others, and try to be, as best you can, a servant leader.

And you have been both: a servant leader and someone who has worked to lift our brothers. I will tell you, I have been here a good while. I am not sure, but in the two statements by my current colleague, Senator Cardin, and my former colleague, Senator Mikulski, that is about as close to a canonization as I have heard in this room. So we are grateful for all of that.

I wanted to talk about Supplemental Security Income, so-called SSI, and what that means for people. We just had a field hearing in Pennsylvania, in the southeastern corner of our State, and one woman, instead of running through the policy of SSI, just told us what it means to her. Here is what she said. She is from York, PA.

She said this monthly benefit "helps me pay my rent, it helps me get transportation to work, and it helps me pay for my groceries and things I need." Simple as that. That is what it is about, and you know that. We know that there are almost 5 million people with disabilities who are SSI recipients, a huge number of those in Pennsylvania, more than 300,000 who received both the needed cash benefits as well as the essential Medicaid health-care coverage.

One of the requirements for eligibility for SSI is an asset limit of \$2,000 per person. That locks people into poverty, that asset limit. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the \$2,000 asset limit, established in 1984, is now worth \$662 bucks—\$662, not \$2,000, one-third of what it was then.

The Chairman, Senator Wyden, and I and Senator Brown of Ohio have worked to increase the asset limit. So that is the reality now. We are trying to increase that. But in the meantime, one thing we can do to help here is to use an existing opportunity for people that they may not know about.

It's called—these are called ABLE accounts. It is a result of a law I passed years ago. It is basically a 529 plan for people with



disabilities. If you had a child who had a disability, and her sister did not have a disability and was saving for college, there was no way for the child with a disability to save for her disability. Totally unfair; we changed that.

The problem is, we do not have enough people who know about it. So here is what I wanted to ask you—and it is about 150,000 people now who have these accounts. That is the good news. We need to make that bigger.

If you can work with me—and I hope you can, to prioritize working with SSA employees to learn more about ABLE accounts, and then to ensure that they systematically inform SSI recipients about the benefits of opening an ABLE account. Can you work with me on that?

Governor O'MALLEY. Absolutely, Senator. And I have been learning more every day about this agency and the ABLE accounts that you pioneered, and I am looking forward to working with you on that and improving that. It is that interaction between the applicants and the people at SSA, I think—you know, there is not a gigantic budget for doing television commercials, but each of those conversations is an opportunity.

Senator CASEY. Yes; thank you.

Also, on a related issue, the applications for SSI benefits for children with disabilities have been falling in the last decade. It has gone from about 1.4 million to a million, as you know. Tens of thousands, possibly hundreds of thousands of children with disabilities are not receiving services and benefits simply because they have not applied.

There have been reports of SSI recipients who have had their benefits incorrectly reduced or suspended altogether because they received COVID-19 relief payments, which has put some beneficiaries over the \$2,000 asset limit I mentioned earlier.

I am concerned that individuals eligible for SSI are not receiving the benefits they are entitled to, and I have raised this issue along with Senator Wyden and Senator Brown. Will you commit to working with us to fully address the problem of underenrollment and remove the barriers to SSI benefits for children with disabilities?

Governor O'MALLEY. Yes, Senator, I will. I know that one of the strategic goals that the agency has been following is about making sure more outreach is done to traditionally underserved groups. But we need to figure out why it is that, with needs rising, so many fewer children are applying.

Senator CASEY. Yes. And finally—and I am done after this—some Americans have lost their SSI benefits due to COVID-19 relief payments, or are now receiving overpayment notices.

Governor O'MALLEY. That is an outrage.

Senator CASEY. And we look forward to working with you to correct that.

Governor O'MALLEY. Yes. As do I, Senator.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Governor.

Governor O'MALLEY. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. We are now in a situation Senator Mikulski remembers very well, of having multiple votes, and Senators are going to kind of be like trolley cars. We are going to be coming in and out and back and forth. Senator Menendez is next, then would

be Senator Whitehouse, assuming that someone else does not come ahead of them. But we hope we can get both of them in now.

Senator Menendez?

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Governor, according to the Social Security Administration Inspector General, during Fiscal Year 2022 the agency clawed back \$4.7 billion of overpayments, while another \$21.6 billion remains outstanding.

Now, my office has heard from constituents who rely on Social Security who have received letters demanding money back for overpayments made by the agency. Beneficiaries are receiving letters stating that they must pay back thousands, or in some cases even tens of thousands of dollars to the government.

Some individuals are even receiving bills from SSA that date back 40 years. Overpayments push already struggling beneficiaries even deeper into poverty and hardship, which is directly counterproductive to the goals of the program. So first, we have to address the root cause of this issue. If confirmed, do you commit to improving payment accuracy?

Governor O'MALLEY. Yes, sir. Yes, Senator, I do. As I have read those stories about people in danger of losing their homes or other financial catastrophes, it is heartbreaking. And it reminds me of a sad truth that sometimes in government—Federal, State, and local—there are only two speeds: on and off.

We have to do a better job of recognizing the justice at stake in each of these individual cases, and come back to all of you if indeed there needs to be a change in the law.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you.

If beneficiaries believe that an overpayment was not their fault and that paying the money back would cause hardship, they can ask SSA to waive repayment. But trying to resolve an overpayment involves plunging into a nightmarish minefield, a process that can last years, drain beneficiaries of their assets, and leave them without payments for extended periods of time.

Would you commit to making the appeals process more equitable and accessible for beneficiaries?

Governor O'MALLEY. Yes, Senator. That is another big aspect of the customer service.

Senator MENENDEZ. Rules for beneficiaries are complex and hard to follow. Members of the public often struggle to really understand what they are supposed to report. I understand the Social Security Administration is developing a program to tap payroll data from outside sources, and that this information can be used to automatically adjust the amounts paid to beneficiaries.

That project was authorized by Congress nearly 8 years ago. Can you commit to making this a priority upon your confirmation?

Governor O'MALLEY. Yes, Senator.

Senator MENENDEZ. Okay. And let me just turn to two other questions. SSA is at its lowest staffing level in over 25 years. Some individuals are even receiving bills from SSA, as I mentioned before, that date back 40 years. New workers need a long time to get up to speed, and complex rules create trouble for beneficiaries and employees alike.

Are you committed to rebuilding a robust workforce equipped to handle these challenges?

Governor O'MALLEY. Yes, Senator.

Senator MENENDEZ. And, we need to be a partner with you in that regard?

Governor O'MALLEY. I will regularly update this committee, and I look forward to partnering with you as well. Last year, SSA hired at a record number, like 8,000 that they hired, but the attrition rate just carved into that. So we are going to have to do a better job of recruiting, we are going to have to do a better job of training—and a better job of retaining people, rather than demoralizing and making people miserable.

Senator MENENDEZ. Agreed.

A final question, a topic that is frequently overlooked, which is why I bring it up. When we talk about Social Security, it is just how much undocumented immigrant workers contribute without receiving any benefits. Numerous studies have confirmed that through paying payroll taxes, undocumented workers contribute billions into the Social Security funds each year.

For example, in 2016 alone, undocumented workers contributed approximately \$13 billion into the Social Security funds, and again did not receive a single dime in benefits after paying into the system. Given that payroll taxes account for the lion's share of Social Security payouts each year, we simply cannot discuss the future of Social Security without also talking about our immigration system.

Governor, do you agree with the large body of studies showing that the contributions of undocumented immigrant workers have been essential to keeping our Social Security fund solvent?

Governor O'MALLEY. They have certainly been a very important piece of it.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you.

Governor O'MALLEY. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank my colleague.

Senator Whitehouse?

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and welcome, Governor. I am delighted to see you here. I think you are a virtually ideal nominee for this position. But what made my day was not you being here, but Senator Mikulski, Chairman Mikulski being here, who I adore, have occasionally been very frightened of, but have always, always admired. To have her back here in the Senate, where she was such a commanding and effective presence, has been an absolute joy, has made my day.

Two things. First, I think Americans saw the State of the Union speech, where the President called out certain Republicans who had called for Social Security and Medicare cuts. And, as you will recall, there was a fairly boisterous reaction in the chamber to that, culminating in a full-on standing ovation for the proposition that there would not be Social Security or Medicare cuts.

So great, except that that commitment seems to be getting a little spongy, in that in the House, Social Security and Medicare cuts were brought up in the battle over the Speaker as something that Republicans wanted to see in the new Speaker: somebody who would take on Social Security and Medicare. So we will see how that goes.

But let us presume that, what the President called the unanimity that there would not be Social Security cuts or Medicare cuts, holds. That then means that to make Social Security solvent, we've got to address the revenue side. That is essentially arithmetic.

Are you willing to help us as we design revenue-side reinforcements for Social Security, to give us advice and information so that we can do the best job of that?

Governor O'MALLEY. Yes, Senator, and in fact I think that is my primary responsibility, not to make the policy but to make sure that you have, as the policymakers, an evidence-based discussion based on the best data and information from Social Security.

There are very talented people there like Mr. Steve Goss, the Actuary, and others. So that is how I look at my role.

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Good.

The other thing we have seen recently has been a very significant funding boost for the Internal Revenue Service, and that has manifested—in the last meeting I had with the Rhode Island Taxpayer Advocate office—in a lot better response to individual taxpayers.

Where the Taxpayer Advocate was going to the main IRS office and having weeks, even months of delays getting cases addressed, even as the actual Taxpayer Advocate, now those time periods have shortened dramatically. The Taxpayer Advocate is turning over consumer cases more rapidly and effectively, and the public is getting its questions answered and its problems resolved far faster and more effectively than they were beforehand.

I would urge you to look at that as a potential model for what could take place within the administrative side of Social Security, and I think there are a lot of us here who would love to see additional resources come to you in the very same way that we sent additional resources to the IRS, so that the American people, who the IRS and Social Security are designed to serve, can get quick, real, effective answers and not get stuck up in backlogs and delays from understaffing and under-resourcing.

So, consider that as a model that has worked. Continue to look at it—

Governor O'MALLEY. Thank you. I appreciate that.

Senator WHITEHOUSE [continuing]. To see if it continues to work, and know that some of us would love to help you be able to deliver the same results.

Governor O'MALLEY. Thank you, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank my colleague.

Senator Brown, a long-time advocate for these essential issues.

Senator BROWN. Governor O'Malley, thank you for your willingness to serve in this position. Thank you for your commitment and your lifelong commitment, but your commitment to change the culture at Social Security. I know I stand with the chair on the importance of that, so thank you.

Social Security, we all understand, is a solemn promise to the American people. People who have paid into it all their lives deserve to know their government will protect that promise. I hear some in this body talk about privatization. I appreciate your standing strongly against that.

I want to ask about a concern we have heard about, and that is Social Security overpayments to SSI beneficiaries. Senator Wyden, Senator Casey, and I sent a letter last month to the Acting Commissioner, asking why so many people received overpayment notices, and what SSA will do to fix it. Ohioans should not pay the price for the government's mistakes. I look forward to a response to that in writing.

Part of your job would be to administer benefits accurately and efficiently. I know there is interest from both parties on this committee to work together to address the root causes of overpayments. SSA has noted in previous reports that the leading cause is the SSI asset limit, which has not been updated, as you know, since 1984. Am I correct in understanding this outdated asset limit is in fact the leading cause of overpayments?

Governor O'MALLEY. It is a leading cause, and it is a huge administrative burden.

Senator BROWN. Okay. Well, thank you, and you will fix it.

I am working with Senator Cassidy on a bipartisan bill, as we have talked about, the SSI Savings Penalty Elimination Act. It would increase these asset limits. It would stop denying Americans the ability to save money. The chair and I worked together on this in an announcement. It will help people keep their own bank accounts, have control over their futures.

Wyden, Casey, Lankford, four members of this committee all are joining us. This 40-year-old asset limit causes errors, it is difficult to administer. It represents only 4 percent of total benefits, but it requires 30 percent of your administrative budget. Am I correct in understanding that first raising it and updating for inflation would reduce the costly and burdensome workload for SSI and free up valuable resources for other work?

Governor O'MALLEY. From what I have read and talking to experts on this and people who have studied it all their lives, it seems to be a pretty widespread belief that that bicameral and bipartisan leadership of yours would absolutely not only be the right thing to do for the recipients, the right policy, but would also reduce the huge administrative burden that Social Security has to go through, without any really good reason.

As you know, it was not indexed back then, and I applaud you for that bill and Senator Cassidy and the other members of the Senate, who seem to, on some of these Social Security issues, really be striking that sort of can-do, cooperative spirit that all of us like to see here in our Nation's capital.

Senator BROWN. Thank you, Governor. As you point out, as we all point out, it has been 40 years.

Next question is about the SSI application. The current application is 23 pages long, full of complex legalese, and requires rules and supporting documents. The worst part is that in the year 2023, it cannot be completed online.

It is obvious and critical that we ensure that only people who are eligible actually receive benefits, but anyone who has interacted with that system will tell you it is way too complicated for any one person to navigate. You should not need a law degree to successfully get SSI.

What steps will you take to simplify and streamline that application process, to ensure that it is accessible to people who are eligible?

Governor O'MALLEY. Senator, thank you. One of the top orders of business will be to understand that process, and understand it from the standpoint of the customer, the person, the beneficiary.

I can foresee kind of side-by-side lists of things that can be done through regulation, things that can be done with changes in management, things that could be done better in terms of submission of documentation. And some things, if they require a change in law, I will not hesitate to come back to you and others who are so interested in this really important issue.

So it would be a high priority, and I look forward to working with you and your able staff on this.

Senator BROWN. Thank you, Governor. Again, I am thrilled that you agreed to take this job. I know you have a lifelong career in public service that leads me to think, one, you know what you are doing, you can make things happen, and your empathy for others is front and center, and that is what we need in the Social Security administrator.

One more thing that is important, just to comment. It is important to remember that eligibility does not always guarantee access.

Governor O'MALLEY. That is right.

Senator BROWN. Millions of Americans are eligible, tens of millions of Americans, tens and tens of millions of Americans, but not all of them have access. Your job is to close that gap.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Governor O'MALLEY. Thank you, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. All right.

Senator Young, you are next.

Senator YOUNG. Thanks for being here today, Governor.

Governor O'MALLEY. Thank you.

Senator YOUNG. I really appreciate your presence. I am grateful for the service you have given to the public.

Governor, I shared these concerns with you when we met a couple of months ago, but to be frank, I am deeply troubled with the Biden administration's action to remove the previous Social Security Administration Commissioner Andrew Saul from office, in order to appoint someone who more closely aligns with President Biden's political ideology.

This is the sort of smashmouth politics that when campaigning for President, President Biden more than intimated that he would not engage in, and it undermines trust among at least half of America in how our government is run.

So I plan to spend my time today, I think you will find blessedly, understanding what your priorities for the SSA would be if you are confirmed. But I want to be up-front that I do have serious concerns about the way in which that situation was handled, how you were nominated, and the implications it has for the ability of the Social Security Administration to administer benefits going forward, when the agency is subjected to this type of politicization.

So, moving on, as you are no doubt aware, Governor, the Social Security Administration has struggled to retain and to hire the appropriate workforce. Additionally, the administration has had some

challenges getting individuals to return to the office. A recent testimony released by the agency highlights that most field office employees report onsite at least 3 days a week. However, my office has repeatedly heard from constituents who are unable to receive the in-person help that is necessary to address their outstanding casework issues.

So, Governor, what are your views on telework as it applies to SSA and its workforce?

Governor O'MALLEY. Yes. My views on telework have been overall—public sector/private sector, ever since the pandemic when we were all told suddenly “go home and do your best to work from home”—that sort of adversity put stresses on a lot of organizations.

Fortunately for some aspects of SSA, they had already been piloting some telework, but it threw a huge challenge up for administrators. The main test for whether we have staffing right in the field offices is whether people who want face-to-face meetings can get them.

I do not believe it is all about the telework, although I do not think anybody in the private sector would tell you that they feel like they have gotten it quite right yet either. So we need to strive for that balance, with the test being that people can get meetings.

I mean, for example, in your State you have suffered 22 percent loss in SSA staff in Indiana. So, whether somebody is going to an office in Fort Wayne or Indianapolis, that is like one out of five people just are not there. It is not about them teleworking; the positions are not filled.

Similarly, your disability determination, we bemoan the long time that takes. But you have seen an erosion of about 20 percent in your State's DDS, those State employees who are reimbursed by the Federal Government. So we need to do three things all at once. We assess this with that North Star of people being able to get meetings face to face when they need them. We need to strike a better balance. We need to hire more people more quickly. We need to retain the people we have. And we need to speed up a few other things like training as well.

Senator YOUNG. Have you established some goals, some metrics; for example, we should retain people for certain average amounts of time, you know, benchmarked against previous terms of service? People should be able to land an in-person appointment within X or Y days of requesting one during different times of the year? Do you have some metrics laid out for this?

Governor O'MALLEY. I have some of my imagination, but I have not quite—because I am not there, I cannot do more than read a lot of the public documents.

Senator YOUNG. But this is something I presume—

Governor O'MALLEY. But that is where we would go. I found in leading a State and leading a city, the best ideas in terms of leading actions, tactics, strategies came from listening to the people, repeatedly, who are on the front lines doing that work, and that is what we will get.

The lagging indicators, I think, are pretty clear. I mean, we have rattled off today how long it takes to get a disability determination, and people being on hold for 37 minutes to get their phone calls

answered are clearly two high-opportunity targets for us to improve.

Senator YOUNG. Disability is a major issue for my constituents. I will submit a question for the record—because I know I have colleagues waiting—about the amount of time. I have constituents from Greensburg, IN in particular who have had some challenges. So thank you.

Governor O'MALLEY. Thank you, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank my colleague.

Just a quick point. The Senator from Indiana knows that I always, very much enjoy working with him. On this point, with respect to the right to name an individual, we can give you all the Supreme Court cases on this, and there have been two.

The Court has decided in effect, whether you like somebody or dislike somebody in this position, the President has the ability to nominate the person they want. And I will share the cases with colleagues on both sides of the aisle.

Senator Hassan?

Senator HASSAN. Thanks very much, Mr. Chair and Ranking Member Crapo. Thank you both for the hearing. Governor, it is good to see you. Thank you for your interest in this position. Thank your family too for supporting you throughout a distinguished career in public service.

Governor O'MALLEY. Thank you.

Senator HASSAN. I am going to ask you about something you have already been asked about, because it is really important to my State, my constituents. I am deeply concerned about the burden placed on individuals when the Social Security Administration works to recoup payments that the agency made because of its own errors.

So, it obviously can cause real financial harm to beneficiaries. We have constituents who are reaching out all the time to share that they are struggling to make ends meet because SSA has unexpectedly and drastically reduced their benefits, sometimes by hundreds of dollars a month.

As the agency works to recoup overpayments—and sometimes they are working to recoup overpayments, and they are in error about the need to do that. It is their own mistake. So, if confirmed, will you commit, Governor, to continuing efforts to minimize the agency errors that lead to these problems for beneficiaries, including my constituents in the Granite State?

Governor O'MALLEY. I will certainly commit to that, Senator. It has been heartbreaking, reading some of these stories. People, through no fault of their own, face what in essence looks like a mandated collection agency without regard to the equities and what people are facing. So I will absolutely prioritize that and look forward to working with you on it.

Senator HASSAN. Thank you.

Earlier this year, *The Washington Post* reported that Federal judges are seeing an alarming rate of agency error in the Social Security disability benefits determination process. According to agency data, Federal judges have found agency error in nearly 6 in 10 disability benefit cases brought before them for appeal, and that is obviously unacceptable. Because of agency errors, vulnerable indi-



viduals who are unable to work unnecessarily face delayed benefits, and some incur really costly legal fees as they navigate the appeals process. So how will you work to improve the disability benefits determination process, and will you work to fix the high error rate, if confirmed?

Governor O'MALLEY. Yes. In a nutshell, there is a lot that can be learned about those opinions that happen at the very end of that big funnel. There are fewer people who make it to a Federal court. Some accept a denial at the first level, but others appeal. It can go on forever.

What we need to do a better job of doing is creating a feedback loop between those adjudications and the training lessons that can emerge from identifying patterns and repeated situations, instead of just shrugging our shoulders that there is nothing we can do about it.

Senator HASSAN. Thank you.

One of my priorities as chair of the Emerging Threats and Spending Oversight Subcommittee is reducing Federal agencies' reliance on really costly and aging technology. So I am pleased by the SSA's steady progress to eliminate some of its outdated technologies to save taxpayer dollars and better serve beneficiaries.

How will you continue this progress and leverage technology modernization to improve customer experience at the Social Security Administration?

Governor O'MALLEY. Yes, Senator, thank you. The Social Security Administration is such a large entity, and yet they tend to be somewhat—in my reading and from what little I know, they tend to be somewhat insular in their approach to technology.

So I plan on—if I am fortunate enough to earn the trust and be confirmed, I plan to open that up more and especially bring in some of the top people we have in our own Federal Government, for starters, from United States Digital Service; do a systems assessment; and also listen, talk with the workers who actually have to depend on these systems.

Some of them, as they have told you as well, they have to shift between closing down and opening up 16 different screens in order to do their job. It should not be that way. So we are going to bring in people from U.S. Digital Service, we are going to do a top-to-bottom review, and we are most importantly going to put the customer in the center of the equation and listen to our workers.

Senator HASSAN. Well, I appreciate that. And I would just make the point to you and to my colleagues that one of our challenges in modernizing IT throughout the Federal Government is that urgent always crowds out the important in some of these situations.

We really need to not only invest money, but make it a priority across agencies, and I look forward to working with you on that.

Governor O'MALLEY. And I with you. Thank you, Senator.

Senator CRAPO [presiding]. Thank you.

Senator Blackburn?

Senator BLACKBURN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, Governor, welcome. We appreciate that you are here.

Governor O'MALLEY. Thank you, and thank you for our time on the phone.

Senator BLACKBURN. First—oh absolutely.

Governor O'MALLEY. It is a stressful time in the world and in the Nation.

Senator BLACKBURN. Well, it is a busy time, but every day is a busy time.

Looking back through your experiences in your career, what do you think is the most relevant piece of experience you have that you will transfer into leading the SSA?

Governor O'MALLEY. I believe the most relevant piece is my ability to apply principles of performance management in ways that improve customer service and also build up employee morale. So it is really about my experience as a manager and, in particular, performance management applied to large organizations.

Senator BLACKBURN. I appreciate that.

Talk to me a little bit. You know, you've got 60,000 employees over there. The agency obviously needs to go through some reform and right-sizing, and making certain that you have the right people in the right seats, basically. We need to make certain that seniors who have a question can get to somebody to talk to.

So how are you going to handle those personnel issues—and then, following on to what Senator Hassan said, with IT and the management there—the cybersecurity, the data security, so that people know their data is not going to be compromised or hit?

We have had an issue with some data breaches in Federal Government data bases. I look at that all as one thing: the human capital, the technology for them to appropriately use. So talk a little bit about your approach there.

Governor O'MALLEY. Sure. SSA underwent a big effort to hire last year, with your authorizations, and they actually did hire more people in one year than they ever had before. It was decentralized rather than centralized, and that was a good thing, except that they lost a lot of people by attrition. So, we have to ramp up those efforts.

In terms of leadership and making sure the right people are in the right places, people are going to self-select. Once we create a winnable game—we have clear goals, we have strategies and tactics that we start measuring every 2 weeks—the leaders will rise. In my experience, I saw that happen in a very moribund bureaucracy in 1999, in a municipality, and I saw the same thing across a State government.

Finally, on the issue of technology—you know, one of the things we have not talked on too much today yet, that you are alluding to, is fraud in the sense of identity theft.

There are many aspects of fraud. Sometimes it can be bribing a Social Security employee, sometimes it can be a representative taking money from their charge in Nashville or any other city. But there is a real need to not think of these as separate silos, but to integrate the fraud detection and the cybersecurity to more readily and quickly identify the anomalies and patterns—before a movie producer does.

Senator BLACKBURN. Well, you are precise on that, and that is why some of us have been pushing for an online consumer privacy bill—that front-facing part that consumers are going to deal with on the privacy, on that access issue—but then also on the back-

facing, when you are looking at the cyber issues and detecting those breaches.

One other question I have for you: you've got the solvency issue—2034 the fund runs out. The trustees have been very up-front about this. So, what is your first-step plan to address the solvency, because it has not been addressed?

Governor O'MALLEY. That is right. And, Senator, you and I spoke about this a little bit. I would hope in the months ahead we talk about it more.

I would never tread on the trust that the people have given you to be the policymaker. Having said that, I do believe I can help raise the level of trust in the country by raising customer service, and I mean the quality of the customer service.

I mean, how are your constituents going to support you in making tough decisions about solvency, all of you together, if their phone calls do not get answered? But secondly, the agency has a responsibility to make sure that you get answers to your questions in terms of what the dials of those policy levers are worth.

How much is it if we made this change? If we made that change, what does that do for solvency? What is the impact of another policy considered? And that is what I have to focus on for all of you. As Senator Cassidy said to me, we need to have an evidence-based discussion about the realities and what each of the values of these various dials is.

Senator BLACKBURN. That is exactly right, and we will depend on you for that.

My time has expired. Thank you so much.

Governor O'MALLEY. Thank you, Senator.

Senator CRAPO. Thank you.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO?

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you. I want to thank both Chair Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo for this conversation today. Most importantly, I want to thank you, Governor, for your willingness to step up and serve in this important position.

Governor O'MALLEY. Thank you, Senator.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. I also thank you for the opportunity to sit down with you and talk with you. Great to see your family here. It's wonderful. We are almost done. Everybody can go get some lunch.

But let me just say this. I have been listening to my colleagues. Of course, in Nevada, there are what, over 570,000 Nevadans who get benefits from Social Security, right? Customer service is key. What I hear from you today is that you are committed to ensuring that you are improving upon and fixing and addressing some of the customer concerns that we are all hearing in our States, and going to make it a priority; is that correct?

Governor O'MALLEY. That is correct.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you.

I also heard today—and I heard Senator Mikulski speak very, very highly of you. A couple of things I picked out though, which you just addressed, were you do have a history of using performance management and customer service technologies to improve government function as it connects with constituents; correct?

Governor O'MALLEY. That is true. Customer service, performance management—they have been kind of my wishbone offense of service in any of my executive tours of duty.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you.

And then, I also picked up on Senator Young—and I think Senator Brown mentioned this as well: people with disabilities. In Nevada, including in my own family, there are challenges with getting the benefits in a timely fashion, and it should not be that hard. It should not be that complex for individuals to reach out to that system and receive that support in a timely way.

It matters when you are disabled and you need that help. So, if confirmed, can I get your commitment to work to ensure that families can access their SSI benefits without having to navigate those burdensome and overly complex enrollment processes?

Governor O'MALLEY. SSDI, SSI, all of those, both—and yes, Senator, you have my commitment.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you.

And then, like my colleagues, again I think we all are concerned about ensuring the integrity of the trust fund, the Social Security trust fund, long-term, beyond 2033. I also know that part of ensuring and safeguarding it is to address some fraud, waste, and abuse that will happen, and that is where you will come in.

Can you talk a little bit about it? You were talking about it with Senator Blackburn, about both the fraud and cybersecurity. What are your thoughts there on how we can safeguard that fund from any type of that, either that fraud or the waste?

Governor O'MALLEY. There is an enormous amount of information that Social Security has, that Social Security collects. I am not talking just about individual Social Security numbers and earnings and the way we are able to share all that with thousands and thousands of other people, banks, voter registration, and other folks.

But if we can take that information and turn it into a dynamic picture that all of us can see, one is better able to get in front of emerging anomalies that could lead investigators to discover fraud, to discover abuse. What I mean by that is that oftentimes, when we go after waste, fraud, and abuse, there is a sense that well, you put it over there in that department or with that IG and you hope that it does not make any embarrassing headlines.

But in creating an operational picture that everybody can see—and yes, on a map—you can start to look at things like, why is it that in that particular hearing office, you are seeing an emerging hot spot of, let us say a wait time, or why are you seeing such a dramatic speed that does not exist anywhere else? Is that waste, fraud, or abuse? Is that an extremely talented person? Is something else going on?

So, it is the ability to have the eyes for fraud and waste and abuse at that operational table, not long after the fact that somebody has received an anonymous tip on the tip line, but to see those emerging patterns that should alert any investigator to get on that right away.

I think that there is a lot of low-hanging fruit, if you will, to be identified.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you, I appreciate that.

And then finally—it is not something that you have control over, but I would hope we all continue to push for Senator Brown’s Social Security Fairness Act. It repeals the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset. It is kind of—it really is crazy to me that we have workers in our communities who have earned these benefits, and then lose out on them because of some sort of pension offset. They have earned it; they are entitled to the funds. So I am hopeful that we can get that legislation passed.

Thank you.

Senator CRAPO. Thank you, Senator.

Senator DAINES?

Senator DAINES. Chair Crapo, thank you. Governor O’Malley, good to see you. I enjoyed our conversation we had back in September on the phone.

Governor O’Malley. Thank you for making the time for me.

Senator DAINES. Absolutely.

Governor O’MALLEY. And you have a beautiful State.

Senator DAINES. I agree with you.

I want to read a quote. “Today, Social Security is strong. But by 2032, the trust fund will be exhausted and Social Security will be unable to pay the full benefits older Americans have been promised.”

Now, one might think that quote came from the CBO last week, last month. Maybe it came from the Social Security Administration study recently. That quote is 24 years old. In fact, I am quoting President Bill Clinton’s 1999 State of the Union speech. Unfortunately, we are still on track toward that same projection more than 2 decades after President Clinton made those remarks.

Earlier this summer, the CBO published their long-term projections on the Social Security trust fund’s financial outlook, and I think calling the outlook bleak is probably optimistic. We are just 10 years away from insolvency. By 2033, the Social Security trust fund will be depleted and unable to pay out full benefits.

This means there will be an immediate cut to Social Security benefits across the board in 10 years unless Congress acts. And it is not just individuals in their 20s, their 30s, their 40s facing these benefit cuts once they hit retirement age. Today, if you are 57 years old, when it comes time to receive your Social Security benefits at 67, you will get a check 25-percent less than what you have earned.

These cuts do not take into account need, age, and income level. Every single individual receiving Social Security will have a guaranteed benefit cut no matter their circumstances.

Establishing the Social Security Administration as an independent agency was designed to restore public trust, but I can tell you, speaking on behalf of Montanans, they have never been less certain about the future of Social Security and their benefits.

Governor, if you are confirmed as Commissioner, what steps will you take to restore the public trust in this program and build some bipartisan consensus? Because we all know up here, this is going to have to be a bipartisan exercise toward the reforms needed to save and, better yet, strengthen Social Security for my children, grandchildren, and frankly my peers.

Governor O'MALLEY. Well, Senator, you have articulated the challenges facing us very, very well. One aspect of restoring trust from the general public, people in Montana, people waiting for a disability determination from an office that has seen a 30-percent reduction in staff, is to do a better job on answering the phone and providing those determinations in a more timely fashion. That is where I am going to be throwing the vast majority of my daily energies.

But the other big crisis is that crisis of solvency, and we are fortunate in the Senate that there seems to be a spirit still alive for what might be called that spirit of moderation, that understanding that the toughest problems require some coming together.

We have seen that with Senator Cassidy's bill, with Sherrod Brown about raising the asset limits. So I see my job as supporting you in doing yours. You are the policymakers, and my job is to make sure that you get the best data, the best evidence, and the best information from the actuaries, so that you men and women can reach that precious consensus that everyone in America is trusting that you will.

Senator DAINES. Governor, thanks. I am certain we will rely on you and your input, not just in delivering better customer service, which of course is Mission 1 here, assuming you are confirmed. But I think we are going to need to be able to juggle at least a couple of balls here and look over the long haul in getting your thoughts coming from the agency as well, because we are going to have to figure this out together—

Governor O'MALLEY. Yes sir.

Senator DAINES [continuing]. To make this trust fund solvent and avoid this cliff that we are rapidly approaching. So, Governor, thank you for your thoughtful comments. We look forward to working with you.

Governor O'MALLEY. Thank you, Senator.

Senator CRAPO. Thank you.

Senator Carper?

Senator CARPER. Yes. Thanks. From one recovering Governor to another recovering Governor, welcome to the Finance Committee. Thank you for your willingness to serve our country in yet another important role.

I was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives—I had been a State Treasurer for a number of years, a Naval flight officer before that. But I was elected to the Congress in 1982, and there were a bunch of us. I mean, I think that we had a freshman class of maybe 80, almost 100 people; a lot of Democrats, a lot of Republicans.

And the first week or so that we were in office, I think my recollection is we got on a train—I don't think we flew—but I think we got on a train and we went to Harvard, all the newly elected House members. The idea was to get to know each other and the idea was to try to begin focusing on some of the big issues of the day.

One of the big issues of the day was that the Social Security trust fund was running out of money. One of the first issues that I worked on as a young House member was Social Security availability, to make sure that it was going to be there for future generations.

One of my favorite sayings is, “find out what works, and do more of that.” And as we visit, revisit the same issue here all these years later, that might be a good thing to do. Among the things that worked was, we decided not to make it a partisan issue. We decided to make it a bipartisan issue.

And there were Democrats and Republicans who stood up and said there is not one silver bullet, there are a lot of different things that we have to do and need to do, and we did most of those. The key was leadership. We had leadership from the President at the time. We had strong leadership from the Democrat and Republican leaders in the House and the Senate. We had great leadership on the committees of jurisdiction as well.

So, I am delighted that we, as recovering Governors, may be in a position to come back and help us address this issue again. We have a number of members of this committee, Democrat and Republican. One of the key members is a fellow from Louisiana. He is a doctor, but he is pretty good on these issues and not afraid to be courageous on these issues.

So I would—with that having been said, I have a statement here, but I just would rather talk from my heart. And sometimes I get in trouble doing that, but I would rather talk from my heart. I have a question though that my staff was good enough to give me.

If confirmed, how do you plan to expand interagency coordination to improve the Social Security Administration’s customer service and response times? As Governor, you had a State pension; you had probably a bunch of pension plans in your State for State employees and others that you were sort of responsible for, ultimately.

And one of the things that I focused on as Governor was trying to make sure that when somebody was calling our Division of Revenue about tax issues, that somebody got on the phone and helped them; when somebody who was calling the pension office, the State pension office in Newark and had questions about it, that somebody got on the phone and helped them. And we actually were very practical.

The record at the Social Security Administration for customer service is not good. My first question then would be, how do you plan to expand interagency coordination to improve the Social Security Administration’s customer service and response times?

Governor O’MALLEY. Yes, Senator, thank you for your question. And the key is going to be to snap Social Security out of what has been a long time-honored practice of contenting itself with annual accountability, like a budget and the annual budget inputs. And instead, we have to get into a much faster velocity, a much more agile speed of bringing about the changes that we all know need to happen so that people get their phone calls answered and they get their face-to-face meetings when they need them—and that, for a member of their family or themselves who is going through a disability determination, that they do not die waiting for it to be resolved if they have to appeal it.

There is no single magic solution to that. But it has been my experience, both as a Mayor and as a Governor, that if you bring people together and you are clear about what the big goals are, it is amazing the way the leaders will rise when you start measuring yardage, when you have a compelling scoreboard that everybody

can see. And it is really about big organizations learning from their own leaders. I mean, if you were to plot on a—

Senator CARPER. I am going to interrupt you. I have a couple of other questions. Let me just ask, have you ever heard the name Danny Werfel?

Governor O'MALLEY. I have. You told me to meet with him, and I did.

Senator CARPER. Good, good, good. One, you know, he is new. He is the new IRS Commissioner, and one of the things—he sat right here where you are sitting, and we talked about the lousy service the IRS was providing.

Governor O'MALLEY. It's getting better.

Senator CARPER. And about 2 years ago, if a taxpayer called the IRS, I think there was like a 13-percent chance of anybody getting on the phone to actually take the call. Last year, it was about up to 87 percent, and a big part of it was the leadership—the leadership. If confirmed—and I sure hope you will be—you are in a great position to provide that leadership. So I would just say now, be strong—and I know you will be.

The thing I started to say is, I believe in the golden rule: treat other people how you want to be treated. And when people call and are asking for help—I do not care whether it is a personal issue or it is a Social Security issue, it is a tax issue—we've got to help them, okay?

The second thing I want to mention is, we have a propensity to send out the improper payments from the Federal Government, improper payments, and I think GAO estimated, their estimate now is there are about \$247 billion—billion dollars with a B—in improper payments across the entire Federal Government for Fiscal Year 2022, just one year—one year.

As elected officials, one of the most important responsibilities, of course, is to be good stewards of taxpayers' dollars. A couple of years ago, 2020 in fact, the Congress passed something called the Stopping Improper Payments to Deceased People Act, and it is a bill that Senator John Neely Kennedy and I partnered on. The law requires the Social Security Administration to share its full file of death information with the Do Not Pay working system for a 3-year period beginning December 27, 2023. That is this December 27, 2023.

I would ask—you may not be able to answer this for the record. But if confirmed, will you commit to working with our staffs—not just Senator Kennedy and myself, but our staffs broadly—to ensure that the Stopping Improper Payments to Deceased People Act is implemented—not overnight, not in a week or in a month, but in a timely way?

Governor O'MALLEY. Yes, Senator. And I appreciate your leadership on that issue: open, transparent data shared by all.

Senator CARPER. Thank you.

I think I have time to go for another one. Here we go. This deals with morale and employee retention at the Social Security Administration. Strengthening the Federal workforce, retaining high-quality talent in Federal agencies is a big concern of mine, and I am sure it will be of yours.



It is critical that our Federal workforce is well-trained. It is critical they be equipped to handle the challenges in the next decade and beyond. The Office of Personnel Management's Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey is conducted every year. It evaluates job satisfaction among Federal workers, as you may know. In 2022, the Social Security Administration was ranked among the lowest Federal agencies included in that survey—lowest.

My question would be, if confirmed, what do you think you would do? What would you be inclined to do from Day 1, maybe drawing on some of your earlier experiences, Governor, to improve morale among Federal workers at the Social Security Administration and to enhance retention and recruitment efforts at that agency? Please.

Governor O'MALLEY. Senator, thank you. I look forward to rolling up my sleeves and working with and being among and with the hardworking men and women at the Social Security Administration. I have not had as many conversations as I will have, if I am fortunate enough to be confirmed by this committee.

But I am looking forward to actually listening to them. My sense, from the people I have spoken to, is that it has been a long time since they have had leaders who would actually listen to what they are experiencing on the front lines in doing the work. That is why you have a record year in terms of new hires, and at the same time a record year of attrition.

People at SSA have historically really had a high sense of mission, a high sense of purpose. The fact that they would sink to the lowest morale in the Nation, I think says a lot more about the lack of leadership there than it does about some sort of sea change or something in the water among the employees.

So I am looking forward to being an operational leader, to being among and with and lifting up the leaders in the eyes of their peers, measuring performance, so that that organization can learn from its highest performers.

When you do that, you create a winnable game for people. They want to come to work. They want to encourage their friends to apply to work there, and that is what we need to get back to. It will not happen overnight, but it does require leadership. And I promise you, Senator, I will throw myself into this challenge with 1,000 percent of what I've got.

Senator CARPER. Good. I am sure you will.

Mr. Chairman, I have known this man since he was like too young to get into O'Friel's Irish Pub in Wilmington, DE. He was part of an Irish singing group that was actually quite extraordinary.

Governor O'MALLEY. So you were in the pub?

Senator CARPER. I was—well, checking IDs at the door, and that is how we met. [Laughter.]

Governor O'MALLEY. All right.

Senator CARPER. Ever since then, and from then till now, who would have thought we would have traveled these different paths? But I am glad your path is taking you here today, and I am delighted to support your nomination. Thank you.

Governor O'MALLEY. Thank you, Senator.

Senator CRAPO. Thank you.

And, Governor, let me give you a quick update. The update is, you are getting close to the end.

We, as you have seen—oh, actually, I was going to say the chairman is on his way back. We have had Senators going in and out, voting, and it looks like we are getting to the end of that. But we have Senator Cassidy next, and then, unless someone else shows up, Mr. Chairman, you are up.

The CHAIRMAN. I have one last question, and it will be short. So, have you recognized Senator Cassidy?

Senator CRAPO. Not yet; go ahead.

The CHAIRMAN. Oh; Senator Cassidy?

Senator CASSIDY. Thank you. Hey, Mr. O'Malley. I enjoyed our meetings.

Governor O'MALLEY. Thank you for making the time. I enjoyed it as well.

Senator CASSIDY. Thank you for that.

One of the issues that I have been concerned with is that after the pandemic, there was a lot of telework that continued, and it is unclear to me that there are processes in place by which people's activities are actually monitored, that their productivity is noted to be strong.

I know that the labor unions want to continue telework, and I know that the Biden administration is trying to get people back to work. My office took a picture of another agency, not yours, but another agency's parking lot on a Monday morning at 10, and you could cut wheelies in it. There were like no cars there.

The American people, I think, are like looking at that, scratching their heads and saying, you know, is anything happening, and they are surmising not. What would be your attitude to continue telework should you be appointed or confirmed?

Governor O'MALLEY. Yes. Senator, the litmus test for knowing when we have the balance right is whether people can get their meetings face to face in the field offices, and when they can get their phone calls answered. So we need to do a better job of staffing those field offices. People in the public sector and private sector, because of the pandemic, have—

Senator CASSIDY. Now let me ask, because staffing could either mean hiring more people or asking people to actually show up there, so they are there to take the meeting.

Governor O'MALLEY. Well, it is a combination of both. The field offices—as I understand it, people are required to be in those field offices.

Senator CASSIDY. Now what about the DC office, because that appears to be—just speaking to the Mayor, listening to the Mayor of Washington, speaking to the administration—it is actually people actually showing up for work, physically showing up for work in DC that has become a real sticking point.

Governor O'MALLEY. I have not spent a whole lot of time in the Washington office, Senator, to be able to tell you. But I do know that in order to run a big organization like this, the people in the center, that circle, have to be tight, they have to be talking every day, and it is really hard to do that if people are not in.

Senator CASSIDY. Now, in our interview, in our conversation which we had, one thing I was impressed by is how you put online

metrics when you were Governor and Mayor, that would allow the people of Baltimore and the people of Maryland to actually see the performance of your various agencies.

And people said, “Oh, you cannot do this.” And you did it, and it worked out very well. Would you commit, if you are confirmed, to developing metrics to make sure that anyone working—one is, getting people back to work, but two, if they continue to telework, have metrics that would be posted online, so that the people of the United States could actually see the metrics showing that people are actually doing work?

Governor O’MALLEY. Yes, sir. That will not happen overnight, but that is what we are going to get to. I believe the first precept, first tenet of the system of performance management I was taught is timely, accurate information shared by all. That means all of us—not just managers, not just workers, but the people who pay for it, the people of the United States.

Senator CASSIDY. That would be good, because right now it seems as if it is unaccountable. And I feel like I am channeling the people from Lake Charles, LA and any other place in our State or our Nation—

Governor O’MALLEY. Right.

Senator CASSIDY [continuing]. Where every time they do not get a phone call answered, they are wondering if somebody is on their couch watching soap operas.

Governor O’MALLEY. Yes, and it is tough. In your State—I mean, if you look at pre-pandemic, we have seen, just on SSA staff in Louisiana, a 24-percent reduction in staff. This is not teleworking staff, just 24 percent fewer. In the DDS determination—we have had some time here talking about that long process—you have seen a 20-percent reduction in your State’s DDS office.

So, we’ve got a lot of work to do on morale, on accountability, on collaboration and coordination, hiring and retention. But at the end of the day, if we do a better job of serving customers, we are going to do a better job of holding on to our people.

Senator CASSIDY. Let me ask you this. SSA’s own research has shown that if we change some of the terminology of how people refer to retirement, it would greatly increase retirement literacy, especially for those who are less educated and more vulnerable.

For example, update the term “early retirement” to “minimum benefit age,” or “normal retirement age” with “standard benefit age,” and “delayed retirement credit” to “maximum benefit age.” Now, studies show this works. We have asked SSA to let us do this, and they want \$12 million to replace nine words on their websites, even though these regularly undergo updates. So why do you need \$12 million to do that which you regularly do?

They also say that this may confuse Americans, the updated wording. Now, my wife just started taking Social Security, if I may hint at my wife’s age, and that was our first time to really go on the website. So, even if the people who are already on it, who I suspect never go to the website, would be confused, most Americans are yet to be on it.

So I guess I am asking you to go into this and ask questions. Why do you need \$12 million to do that which you are already doing? Why don't we listen to our own studies, and why don't we benefit everybody who is going to be coming in, and ideally will be choosing their maximum benefit age as opposed to something which implies that they are going to get less? Are you with me on that?

Governor O'MALLEY. I am with you on it, Senator. I look forward to working with you on that. Sometimes we can do analysis to paralysis, and sometimes under the name of avoiding risk, we also avoid changes that would make a program a lot more effective.

If I may also say, I want to compliment you on what you and Senator Brown did with regard to SSI. It is in the weeds. Probably a lot of people do not appreciate it, but raising the asset limit so that people are not penalized for saving—and also what that would do to remove the marriage penalty—I just want to compliment you for that, as well as for your thoughtful leadership on solvency and the bipartisan spirit that you bring into those issues.

Senator CASSIDY. I thank you for that. Our goal is—by the way, all these questions are not to bust the chops of the guy who might be the SSA guy, the Commissioner, but to try and make the program work better for our fellow Americans.

Governor O'MALLEY. Right.

Senator CASSIDY. If we can do that, we have done our job. But thank you. I appreciate it.

I yield.

Governor O'MALLEY. Thank you, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Cassidy. And we've got to get your good bill passed too, so we will go to work on that.

We are about at the end of the line here, Governor. I want to ask one other question about disability rights, because I remember when I ran the legal aid for the senior citizens, the disability office was sort of right down the corridor.

And we have a million, 1.1 million people waiting for a decision on disability. The average wait time is 217 days. A lot of factors going on, but clearly staffing shortages are key. Now, the reason I am asking this question is, you are a smart guy and a management guy, and it looks to me like there some resources right in front of us that we can move ahead with.

For example, there is the State Disability Determination Service, where State employees can evaluate disability claims on behalf of SSA. Now, this looks like a perfect opportunity for Federal-State teamwork—just as you say, Martin O'Malley, Mr. Can-Do, you know, let's get this done.

Now, Social Security covers the entire bill, but some States have been a little bit reluctant to hire additional staff to process claims or increase their salaries and benefits to make these positions more competitive. So how would you work with the Governors? You were a Governor. I have talked to a lot of these Governors about you, and you have a lot of fans out there.

Governor O'MALLEY. Well, thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. So I think a good way to wrap this up is just to have you give us a sense of a partnership—Federal Government,

these Governors—helping disabled people, putting more resources to it, chopping that 217 days down. Your thoughts?

Governor O'MALLEY. Yes. That is a big chunk of it. There are 50 different States with their own disability offices, and they need to make those determinations. I would be picking up the phone and getting on the phone with other Governors. Senator, you can send letters all you like, but we really need to elevate the focus on this in the eyes of Governors.

There is an adage that the things that get measured are the things that get done. But if the Governors are not seeing those measurements, I would wager to guess that there are many Governors who have no idea whether their staffing is up or down in their State DDS offices.

And we need to elevate it. We need to elevate the focus; we need to encourage and ask our Governors to make it a higher priority. The other important aspect of this is people in the disability advocacy community and also people who, for a living, represent people when they are filing appeals. That is a wealth of information that can come back to improve this process, eliminate redundancies, and give people the justice and the help they deserve.

The CHAIRMAN. My last comment is: something like 3 hours ago, I asked you about this matter of somebody I have the honor to represent at home in Albany, OR, and her being punished because her parents lent a helping hand to try to help her get by, and now she owes the government \$9,000 in overpaid benefits.

And you are going to help us. You said, "Hey, I will stick to this timetable. We are going to come up with some plans, we are going to move ahead," and that is very welcome. I just enjoyed listening to your passion for this issue, because the question I was most interested in was the first one, and we heard a little bit about that.

You know, Senators are Senators. They show up, there is a microphone, they are going to ask about a lot of things, and you kept it to service. That is really what the American people are looking for right now. I happen to think the best politics is good service. So, if you want to be political, go off and give people some good service. And this is about people who worked their whole lives paying into Social Security. They earned these benefits, and they have a right to them.

You heard a lot of Senators today talking about how important this issue is to them, and that is very welcome. We heard Democrats and Republicans talking about how important it is.

And now we have a little bit of business that we have to take care of. I want to notify members that we are going to hold the vote on the Rollinson, Kouzoukas, and Neuman nominations today during the 1 p.m. vote in Room 219 in the Capitol. For members—with respect to the written questions—the deadline will be Tuesday, November 7th, at 5 p.m.

But I think, Governor, what you've told us over the last 3 hours or so is exactly what public service needs more of. I welcome that, and we look forward to working with you. And I guess your nomination started with me, because we had the first call, and I guess we are wrapping it up together today.

I want the American people to know that I support your nomination, I support it strongly, and I think you are going to do a superb job.

With that, the Finance Committee is adjourned.  
[Whereupon, at 12:20 p.m., the hearing was concluded.]

## APPENDIX

### ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. MIKE CRAPO,  
A U.S. SENATOR FROM IDAHO

Governor O'Malley, congratulations on your nomination, and thank you for your willingness to serve.

This nomination is long overdue, coming more than 2 years after President Biden removed the prior Senate-confirmed Commissioner. During this time, the Social Security Administration has struggled to fulfill its customer service mission.

The Social Security Administration is responsible for overseeing the Social Security program, which provides more than \$1 trillion in benefits to millions of seniors, individuals with disabilities, and their families each year. The SSA also administers the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program, assigns Social Security numbers, and issues Social Security cards.

Given the SSA's important responsibilities, the public rightly expects the agency to provide timely, responsive service. However, SSA is not living up to these expectations. For Fiscal Year 2023, Americans waited more than 7 months, on average, for a disability decision at the initial level. For those denied at the initial level, they waited another 7 months at the reconsideration level and another nearly 15 months if they sought a hearing before an administrative law judge.

While not all applicants will qualify for disability benefits, they all deserve to receive a decision within a reasonable period of time. The Social Security Administration must take additional steps to reduce wait times for a disability decision and address outdated disability program rules.

SSA's national 800 number is one of the primary channels for seeking assistance from the agency, and it must do more to address wait times. In Fiscal Year 2023, callers to the national 800 number waited more than 35 minutes, on average, to speak with a representative, compared to approximately 13 minutes 2 years prior, and around 10 minutes a decade ago. SSA should also continue improving its online offerings, which not only increase flexibility for beneficiaries, but also allow the agency to be more efficient with its resources.

Americans rightly expect that the SSA will be a responsible steward of taxpayer funds. However, for Fiscal Year 2021, the SSA issued approximately \$2.49 billion in improper payments for Social Security and \$4.91 billion for SSI. The agency has additional tools to prevent improper payments before they occur, and the agency should use them.

Finally, while the President and Congress are tasked with ensuring Social Security's long-term solvency, the SSA plays a critical role in making sure the administration, Congress, and the public have accurate and timely information about the program's long-term finances. This year, for the first time in over a decade, the Social Security trustees report was delivered to Congress by the statutory April 1st deadline. I expect a new Commissioner to help ensure that the trustees report deadline is treated as a deadline, not a suggestion.

Governor O'Malley, if confirmed, you will face immense challenges and a relatively short timeline to get the Social Security Administration back on track. This may be a tall order, but the American people deserve nothing less.

I look forward to hearing your testimony and responses to our questions to better understand: how you would evaluate and address SSA's customer service challenges;

what specific data you would look at to evaluate the use of telework; how you would ensure that the SSA's independent status is maintained in practice; and what would be your top areas of focus with respect to modernizing the SSA's information technology?

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. BARBARA MIKULSKI,  
A FORMER U.S. SENATOR FROM MARYLAND

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for inviting me to appear before the Finance Committee on the nomination of Martin O'Malley.

I welcome this opportunity to testify to share with you my knowledge of Martin O'Malley and his capabilities for the position under consideration, and why I feel so strongly that Social Security needs a strong leader at this time.

We in Maryland have a lot of home-state pride to have the Social Security Administration headquartered here in Maryland, where it has been for 88 years, first in downtown Baltimore City and now in Woodlawn.

In the 1930s, when choking on the dust bowl or working in the rust bowl, Americans needed a safety net, and that is when Social Security was created. For 88 years there has not been a missed payment. But it is in much need of management reform.

Today, Social Security is facing a crisis in consumer constituent delivery services. These issues are very familiar to the committee.

So many Americans depend on their Social Security, not only as a lifeline, but a life preserver that keeps them afloat.

The challenges of the Social Security Administration include long wait times for phones and constituent service, backlog of decisions, dated technology, a worn facility, and an overwhelmed but dedicated workforce.

The hardworking men and women of the Social Security Administration need a strong, confirmed operational leader, and the American people need a Social Security Administration that works for them. I believe that Martin O'Malley would provide that leadership and management skill.

I have known him personally and worked with him professionally for over 3 decades. I knew him when he had more law books than ties. Martin started as my field director while I was in the Senate; he then ran for the City Council (which we in Baltimore have nicknamed the Pothole Parliament); and continued on as a multi-term Mayor and then 2-term Governor.

Service is in his DNA. He attended schools such as Gonzaga and Catholic University law school. His mom even worked for me in constituent services while I was in the Senate. The values, again, of service.

When he was elected Mayor, because of his public flair, people thought he would showboat, but instead he turned out to be a tugboat, pulling the delivery of services in new and efficient ways.

He earned the Innovation in Government award from the Kennedy School at Harvard for creating "Citistat/311." City services actually improved, and he took that same approach as Governor, where then, many of you here led him to the NGA.

Martin O'Malley was not for big government, but smart government using technology, data, and metrics. He has the talent and know-how to master technology and for getting things done on time. He used metrics to assess whether the job was being done, on time and within budget. He believes in using technology and data for the appropriate deployment of resources and technology to measure personal performance, not to castigate but to motivate, and guess what—things improved.

Social Security needs a seasoned leader and manager, and Martin O'Malley would be the one that provides that. We take great pride in Social Security, and we want it to be one of the best-led agencies, focused on constituent responsiveness and ending the backlog of wait times.

Mr. Chairman, this is why I do think that he brings the commitment to service, the skillset, and fiscal responsibility that is needed for the Social Security Administration. I commend him to you for your consideration.



PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. MARTIN J. O'MALLEY, NOMINATED TO BE  
COMMISSIONER, SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Chairman Wyden, Ranking Member Crapo, and members of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing.

I would like to thank Senator Cardin and former Senator Mikulski for their kind introductions and their outstanding service to our country and to the State of Maryland. I want to thank President Biden for his trust in me. Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Judge Katie Curran O'Malley, and my children, Grace, Tara, William, and Jack, for their steadfast support in this challenge, and in every other call to public service which our family has answered.

When I was a boy, I was taught by my parents—children of the Great Depression, young people tested by their service in World War II—that the greatness of our country is found in the care and concern we show for one another, especially those who are sick, those who are old, those who are lonely, those who are living with disabilities, children; our neighbors who would otherwise go hungry.

Social Security is the most far-reaching and important act of social and economic justice that the people of the United States have ever enacted. For tens of millions of Americans across our country, Social Security is the difference between living with dignity or living in poverty.

For 88 years—without ever missing a single benefit payment—Social Security has strived to provide the right amount, to the right person, at the right time. And for the long arc of its history, Social Security has done so with a high degree of accuracy. But today, for all its historic strengths, we must acknowledge that Social Security faces a customer service crisis.

The truth is, today the Social Security Administration is serving a 50-percent increase in beneficiary customers with the same levels of staffing they had in 1995. Today, a senior citizen who calls the 800 number of the Social Security Administration will face an average hold time of 37 long minutes. Today, an American in need of disability benefits will wait 220 days for an initial decision, and perhaps as long as 2 years for an appeal.

This is not the greatness of America. This is not acceptable.

If someone wants a face-to-face meeting with a Social Security employee to claim their benefits, they should be able to get one. If you are a person already living with a severe disability, you shouldn't have to be dragged through 2 years of "due process" to receive the benefits for which you have already spent a lifetime working.

We can and we must do better as a Nation, and as an agency. I believe President Biden nominated me for this position because I have the leadership skills, the management skills, and the experience—needed at this moment—to lead this organization forward.

As a Mayor, I learned there is no Democratic or Republican way to fill a pothole. As a Governor, I learned the biggest challenges can only be tackled with bipartisan consensus. But, as both a Mayor and as a Governor, I developed a discipline for harnessing data and information technology in ways that got the best out of large, siloed organizations of people that many—inside and outside of government—thought too unwieldy, too slow, or too steeped in excuses to change.

Despite the challenges the agency faces, I have no doubt whatsoever that the hardworking, patriotic, and dedicated men and women of the Social Security Administration of the United States are up to this moment. And so am I.

With your consent and confirmation, it would be the honor of a lifetime to lead Social Security's outstanding public servants forward, together, in such an important mission. And it would be a great privilege to be able to provide each of you—as our Nation's elected policymakers—with the best information you need to make the decisions necessary for the long-term strength and well-being of Social Security for the years ahead.

With deep humility, I look forward to hearing your advice, answering your questions, and earning your consent.

Thank you.

**SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
**STATEMENT OF INFORMATION REQUESTED**  
**OF NOMINEE**

**A. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

1. Name (include any former names used): Martin Joseph O'Malley.
2. Position to which nominated: Commissioner, Social Security Administration.
3. Date of nomination: July 26, 2023.
4. Address (list current residence, office, and mailing addresses):
5. Date and place of birth: January 18, 1963, Washington, DC.
6. Marital status (include maiden name of wife or husband's name):
7. Names and ages of children:
8. Education (list all secondary and higher education institutions, dates attended, degree received, and date degree granted):

Gonzaga College High School, Washington, DC: High School Diploma, 1981.  
The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC: Bachelor's Degree, 1985.  
University of Maryland Law, Baltimore, MD: Juris Doctorate, 1988.
9. Employment record (list all jobs held since college, including the title or description of job, name of employer, location of work, and dates of employment for each job):

Assistant State's Attorney for Baltimore City, 1988–1990.  
Attorney, Law Offices of Donald Daneman, Baltimore City, 1990–1991.  
Mayor and City Council of Baltimore, Councilmember 1991–1999.  
Self-Employed, Martin O'Malley Attorney at Law, 1991–1998.  
Attorney, Wartzman, Omansky Law, Towson, MD 1998–1999.  
Mayor and City Council of Baltimore, Mayor 1999–2006.  
State of Maryland, Governor 2007–2015.  
Banner LLC, solely owned advisory/consulting business 2015–present.
10. Government experience (list any current and former advisory, consultative, honorary, or other part-time service or positions with Federal, State, or local governments held since college, including dates, other than those listed above):

Advisory Board to U.S. Secretaries of DHS, 2009–2013.  
Democratic Co-Chair of the U.S. Council of Governors (appointed by President Obama), 2013–2015.
11. Business relationships (list all current and former positions held as an officer, director, trustee, partner (*e.g.*, limited partner, non-voting, etc.), proprietor, agent, representative, or consultant of any corporation, company, firm, partnership, other business enterprise, or educational or other institution):

Guidehouse Advisory—Senior Advisor for Smarter Government, 2022–present.  
BuildWithin—Advisor, 2022–present.  
ClimateView—Advisor, 2022–present.  
Merit—Advisor, 2021–present.  
Nitro—Advisor, 2021–present.  
Protected by AI—Advisor, 2020–present.  
Incapsulate—Advisor, 2019–present.  
Queensland Investment Corporation, U.S.A—Advisor, 2019–present.

Hytech Rides Rewards—Advisor, 2018–present.  
 ClearGov—Member, Board of Directors, 2017–present.  
 Geolitica—Member, Board of Directors, 2017–present.  
 Amida—Advisor, 2017–present.  
 Barcoding.com—Advisor, 2017–present.  
 Rivada Networks—Member, Board of Directors, 2016–present.  
 Grant Thornton Advisory—Senior Advisor for Smarter Government, 2018–2022.  
 Project Drawdown—Board member, 2016–2022.  
 Tecore Technologies—Consultant, 2020–2021.  
 Ecosystem Investment Partners—Consultant, 2020–2021.  
 SPIN—Advisor, 2017–2021.  
 MetroLab Network—Chair of Advisory Board, 2016–2021.

12. Memberships (list all current and former memberships, as well as any current and former offices held in professional, fraternal, scholarly, civic, business, charitable, and other organizations dating back to college, including dates for these memberships and offices):

Member, Maryland State Bar Association, since 1988.  
 Fellow, National Academy of Public Administration, since 2019.  
 Commissioner, International Commission Against the Death Penalty, 2020 to present.

13. Political affiliations and activities:

- a. List all public offices for which you have been a candidate dating back to the age of 18.

Maryland State Senate, 43rd District, 1990.  
 Baltimore City Council, 3rd District, 1991; 1995.  
 Mayor of Baltimore, 1999; 2003.  
 Governor of Maryland, 2006; 2010.  
 President of the United States, 2016.

- b. List all memberships and offices held in and services rendered to all political parties or election committees, currently and during the last 10 years prior to the date of your nomination.

Chair of the Democratic Governors Association: 2011–2013.  
 O'Say Can You See PAC: 2012–2017.  
 Win Back Your State PAC: 2017–2020.

- c. Itemize all political contributions to any individual, campaign organization, political party, political action committee, or similar entity of \$50 or more for the past 10 years prior to the date of your nomination.

To the best of my knowledge and after considerable research using Federal, State, and local campaign finance databases, these are my personal political contributions over the past 10 years:

Eric Costello for Baltimore City Council. \$500 (8/9/2023).  
 Kate Fulton for Rockville City Council. \$100 (8/8/2023).  
 Baltimore City Central Committee. \$250 (7/12/2023).  
 Andy Beshear for Governor. \$500 (2/21/2023).  
 Brooke Lierman for Maryland. \$100 (10/27/2022).  
 Wes Moore for Maryland. \$500 (10/13/2022).  
 Steve Johnson for Delegate. \$500 (10/13/2022).  
 Wes Moore for Maryland. \$1,000 (9/28/2022).  
 Protect Cecil: Write In Write Now. \$250 (9/25/2022).

Friends of Odette Ramos [Maryland]. \$250 (9/21/2022).  
 Janet Mills for Governor. \$1,000 (8/23/2022).  
 Friends of Samay Singh Kindra [Maryland]. \$250 (6/29/2022).  
 Friends of Sean D. Burns, Esq. [Maryland]. \$250 (6/15/2022).  
 Lower Shore Progressive Caucus PAC. \$250 (6/7/2022).  
 Friends of Todd Nock [Maryland]. \$500 (5/19/2022).  
 Matthew O'Malley for Boston City Council. \$250 (5/16/2019).  
 Carroll County Democratic Central Committee. \$125 (5/16/2022).  
 Eric Lynn for Congress. \$200 (5/13/2022).  
 Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. \$2,500 (5/11/2022).  
 Friends of Michele Gregory [Maryland]. \$500 (5/11/2022).  
 Friends of Julie Palakovich Carr [Maryland]. \$250 (5/7/2022).  
 Washington County Democratic Central Committee. \$195 (4/21/2022).  
 Western Maryland Democratic PAC. \$1,400 (4/20/2022).  
 Elect Andre Johnson [Maryland]. \$250 (4/9/2022).  
 Friends of M.C. (Mary). Keegan-Ayer [Maryland]. \$250 (4/8/2022).  
 Citizens for Jerry Donald [Maryland]. \$200 (4/8/2022).  
 Danny O'Connor for Congress. \$250 (3/14/2022).  
 Danny O'Connor for Congress. \$250 (3/10/2022).  
 Ben Chou for Harris County Commissioner. \$1,500 (3/2/2022).  
 Van Hollen for Senate. \$500 (2/3/2022).  
 Franken for Iowa. \$100 (12/31/2021).  
 Friends of Eric Luedtke [Maryland]. \$250 (12/2/2021).  
 Katie Curran O'Malley for Maryland. \$6,000 (11/15/2021).  
 Bridie Farrell for Us. \$250 (11/15/2021).  
 Ben Chou for Harris County Commissioner. \$1,000 (11/14/2021).  
 Friends of Izzy Patoka [Maryland]. \$100 (11/10/2021).  
 Glenn Ivey for Congress. \$250 (10/28/2021).  
 Lucas Kunce for Missouri. \$250 (9/22/2021).  
 Friends of Vaughn Stewart [Maryland]. \$250 (9/20/2021).  
 The Calvin Ball Team [Maryland]. \$500 (9/12/2021).  
 Lucas Kunce For Missouri. \$250 (4/25/2021).  
 Friends of Izzy Patoka. \$500 (4/20/2021).  
 Danny O'Connor for Congress. \$500 (4/20/2021).  
 Michael Beson [New Jersey]. \$100 (3/9/2021).  
 Michael Beson [New Jersey]. \$500 (3/9/2021).  
 Powered By People. \$500 (2/21/2021).  
 Friends of Tobias Read [Oregon]. \$500 (2/9/2021).  
 Warnock for Georgia. \$500 (11/18/2020).  
 Christian Motley for City Council [Lexington, KY]. \$500 (10/15/2020).  
 Christian Motley for City Council [Lexington, KY]. \$500 (10/15/2020).  
 Amy Nielsen for Iowa. \$250 (10/12/2020).  
 Shaheen for Senate. \$250 (10/5/2020).  
 Win Back Your State. \$1,800 (10/1/2020).  
 Vincent Sheheen for South Carolina Senate. \$500 (9/4/2020).

Joe Biden. \$800 (8/19/2020).  
 Biden Victory Fund. \$1,000 (08/06/2020).  
 Warnock for Georgia. \$500 (7/15/2020).  
 Win Back Your State. \$1,000 (7/14/2020).  
 Joe Biden. \$1,000 (7/2/2020).  
 Friends of Regina T. Boyce [Maryland]. \$250 (7/1/2020).  
 Margaret Good for Congress. \$250 (6/30/2020).  
 Kim Olson for Congress. \$250 (6/22/2020).  
 Jay Surdukowski for New Hampshire. \$1,000 (6/16/2020).  
 Brandon Scott for Mayor. \$100 (5/29/2020).  
 Franken for Iowa. \$250 (5/27/2020).  
 Kennedy for Massachusetts. \$250 (5/19/2020).  
 Sarah Riggs Amico for Georgia. \$250 (5/14/20).  
 Margaret Good for Congress. \$250 (4/9/2020).  
 Vincent Sheheen for South Carolina Senate. \$500 (4/9/2020).  
 Texas House Democratic Campaign Committee. \$1,000 (3/11/2020).  
 Amy Kennedy Congress. \$250 (3/6/2020).  
 Ferguson, Bill Citizens for. \$250 (12/20/2019).  
 Ferguson, Bill Citizens for. \$250 (12/16/2019).  
 Franken for Iowa. \$500 (11/23/2019).  
 Deval for All. \$1,000 (11/23/2019).  
 Citizens for Maggie McIntosh [Maryland]. \$250 (11/5/2019).  
 Jay Surdukowski for New Hampshire. \$1,000 (10/19/2019).  
 Friends of Regina T. Boyce [Maryland]. \$250 (9/23/2019).  
 Shaheen for Senate. \$500 (9/11/2019).  
 Rickey Cole for Mississippi. \$1,000 (9/7/2019).  
 Win Back Your State. \$1,200 (8/11/2019).  
 Caroline Sullivan for Raleigh. \$500 (8/8/2019).  
 Eric Costello for Baltimore. \$500 (7/16/2019).  
 Friends of Odette Ramos [Maryland]. \$250 (6/7/2019).  
 Beto O'Rourke. \$2,800 (3/20/2019).  
 Win Back Your State. \$600 (3/18/2019).  
 Win Back Your State. \$4,400 (1/22/2019).  
 Emerge Maryland. \$250 (12/12/2018).  
 Win Back Your State. \$5,000 (11/13/2018).  
 Bredeesen for Senate. \$1,000 (10/29/2018).  
 Rob Sand for Iowa. \$500 (10/29/2018).  
 Heather Matson for Iowa House. \$500 (10/27/2018).  
 Cindy Axne for Congress. \$500 (10/27/2018).  
 JD Ford for Indiana Senate. \$500 (10/19/2018).  
 Zack Space for Ohio. \$250 (10/18/2018).  
 Tom Sullivan for Colorado House. \$300 (10/14/2018).  
 Jesse Danielson for Colorado State Senate. \$250 (10/14/2018).  
 Faith Winter for Colorado State Senate. \$250 (10/13/2018).  
 Tammy Story for Colorado State Senate \$250 (10/13/2018).

Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. \$500 (10/8/2018).  
 January Contreras for Arizona Attorney General. \$250 (10/8/2018).  
 Katie Hobbs for Arizona Secretary of State. \$200 (10/7/2018).  
 Laura Kelly for Kansas Governor. \$250 (10/4/2018).  
 Friends of Ben McAdams. \$500 (10/4/2018).  
 Kansas Democratic Party. \$200 (10/3/2018).  
 Tim Gannon for Iowa. \$250 (10/3/2018).  
 Shireen Ghorbani for Congress. \$250 (10/2/2018).  
 Charlie Bailey for Georgia Attorney General. \$250 (10/1/2018).  
 Carolyn for Congress. \$250 (9/29/2018).  
 House Democratic Caucus Committee, Maryland. \$500 (9/28/2018).  
 John Murphy for Recorder [Dubuque County, IA]. \$500 (9/23/2018).  
 Nancy Fett for Iowa. \$250 (9/23/2018).  
 Kevin Kinney for Iowa State Senate. \$500 (9/23/2018).  
 Clarke Tucker for Congress. \$250 (9/11/2018).  
 Helen Tai for Pennsylvania General Assembly. \$1,000 (9/8/2018).  
 Charlie McConkey for Iowa State Representative. \$250 (9/2/2018).  
 Machaela Cavanaugh for Nebraska. \$250 (9/2/2018).  
 Citizens for Brian Frosh [Maryland]. \$2,000 (8/29/2018).  
 Nathan Johnson for Texas Senate. \$250 (8/24/2018).  
 Colin Allred for Congress. \$250 (8/23/2018).  
 James Talarico for Texas House. \$250 (8/20/2018).  
 John Bucy for Texas House. \$250 (8/20/2018).  
 Texas House Democratic Campaign Committee. \$250 (8/20/18).  
 Kopser for Congress. \$250 (8/19/2018).  
 Friends of Ben Jealous [Maryland]. \$500 (8/9/2018).  
 New Hampshire House Democrats. \$500 (8/5/2018).  
 Scholten4Iowa Campaign Committee. \$250 (7/26/2018).  
 Rob Sand for Iowa. \$500 (7/24/2018).  
 Earls for Justice [North Carolina]. \$250 (7/17/2018).  
 Iowa Democratic Party. \$100 (7/16/2018).  
 David Jacoby for Iowa House. \$100 (7/14/2018).  
 Ken Harbaugh for Congress. \$500 (6/28/2018).  
 Friends of David Sloan [Maryland]. \$250 (6/25/2018).  
 Friends of Amy Blank [Maryland]. \$1,000 (6/20/2018).  
 Sutton For South Dakota. \$500 (6/12/2018).  
 Friends of Rushern Baker, III/Comm For Pol Change. \$2,000 (6/8/2018).  
 George Franklin For Congress. \$500 (6/8/2018).  
 Tatiana Matta For Congress. \$250 (5/30/2018).  
 Friends of Tony (Deoleous) Bridges [Maryland]. \$250 (5/30/2018).  
 Jim Shea for Maryland. \$250 (5/23/2018).  
 David Shapiro for Congress. \$100 (4/29/2018).  
 Jason Crow for Congress. \$250 (4/24/2018).  
 Friends of Rushern Baker, III/Comm For Pol Change. \$1,000 (4/19/2018).  
 The Calvin Ball Team. \$500 (4/18/2018).

Alvin Brown for Congress. \$250 (3/31/2018).  
 Friends of Tony (Deoleous) Bridges. \$200 (3/28/2018).  
 Alec Ross for Maryland. \$500 (3/27/2018).  
 Irish American Democrats. \$200 (3/24/2018).  
 Friends of Mike (David) Lyles. \$250 (1/18/2018).  
 Committee for Kevin Kamenetz. \$250 (1/5/2018).  
 Friends of John Olszewski, Jr. \$500 (1/4/2018).  
 J.D. Merrill For Maryland State Senate. \$6,000 (12/26/2017).  
 Michelle Rylands for Washington State Senate. \$500 (11/3/2017).  
 Northam for Governor [Virginia]. \$500 (10/26/2017).  
 Justin Fairfax for Virginia. \$250 (10/23/2017).  
 Anthony Brown for Congress. \$250 (9/30/2017).  
 Pete Fosselman for Montgomery County Council. \$200 (9/16/2017).  
 Kevin Kinney for Iowa State Senate. \$500 (9/10/2017).  
 Nate Boulton for Iowa. \$500 (9/8/2017).  
 Donte Tanner for Virginia Delegate. \$200 (9/2/2017).  
 Annette Taddeo for Florida State Senate. \$500 (8/29/2017).  
 Nate Bouton for Iowa. \$500 (7/20/2017).  
 Wyoming Democratic Party. \$120 (7/15/2017).  
 Trevor Elkins Committee [Ohio]. \$250 (5/4/2017).  
 Friends of Anna Throne-Holst. \$250 (10/19/2016).  
 Austin Young Democrats. \$100 (9/10/2016).  
 O'Malley for President. \$2,700 (6/30/2015).

In addition, my Leadership PACs, O'Say Can You See and Win Back Your State, made political contributions that were not personal donations. As the Chair of the Democratic Governors Association from 2011–2013, head of the Democratic Party of Maryland as Governor from 2006–2015, and a candidate for President from 2015–2016, I was involved in the distribution of campaign contributions from the organizations. Contributions from my Leadership PACs, Democratic Governors Association, Democratic Party of Maryland, and O'Malley for President are publicly available through campaign finance regulatory agencies.

14. Honors and awards (list all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, honorary society memberships, military medals, and any other special recognitions for outstanding service or achievement received since the age of 18):

Similar to many Governors and Mayors, I received many awards, honorary memberships, and other forms of recognition. There is no comprehensive record, but they include:

**The Innovations in Government Award for Citistat/311, Kennedy School, Harvard, 2004**—The City of Baltimore was recognized for combining geographic information technology with customer service (call center) technology to create an enterprise system for performance management and continuous improvement.

**Gartner Award for Customer Relations Management for Citistat/311, 2003**—The City of Baltimore was the first government agency or municipality to ever win the Gartner Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Excellence Award in the large-enterprise category.

**U.S. Chamber of Commerce**, ranked Maryland #1 in Innovation and Entrepreneurship for 3 years in a row from 2011–2013.

**Education Week Magazine**, ranked Maryland Public Schools #1 from 2010–2014.

**Governing Magazine**, named Public Official of the Year as Governor in 2012.

**Time Magazine**, named Top Five Big City Mayors in 2005.

15. Published writings (list the titles, publishers, dates and hyperlinks (as applicable) of all books, articles, reports, blog posts, or other published materials you have written):

To the best of my knowledge and after considerable research, these are published materials I have written:

"The Biden administration must vote to abolish the death penalty at the U.N. this week." *America The Jesuit Review*. December 12, 2022. <https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2022/12/12/un-death-penalty-abolition-biden-iran-usa-244324>.

"Fleeing the States: Fraud in State-Administered Pandemic Programs." Co-written with Linda Miller. *Route Fifty*. September 1, 2021. <https://www.route-fifty.com/finance/2021/09/fleeing-states-fraud-state-administered-pandemic-programs/185010/>.

"Effective leadership in the age of information." *Esri Australia*. August 9, 2021. <https://esriaustralia.com.au/blog/technology-creating-new-way-governing>.

"Smart governing for smart cities." *Esri Australia*. August 4, 2021. <https://esriaustralia.com.au/blog/rise-smart-cities>.

"States and Localities Should Implement Equity Compliance Measures." *Route Fifty*. April 26, 2021. <https://www.route-fifty.com/management/2021/04/states-and-localities-implement-equity-compliance-measures/173617/>.

"Baltimore must make full use of American Rescue Plan money." Co-written with Kurt Schmoke. *The Baltimore Sun*. April 22, 2021. <https://www.baltimoresun.com/opinion/readers-respond/bs-ed-rr-baltimore-opportunity-recovery-letter-20210422-satlj7oy65d5jadjqukux52mb4-story.html>.

"You can count on Joe Biden to deliver real change. . . . As I got to see for myself." *Irish Independent*. November 5, 2020. <https://www.independent.ie/world-news/north-america/you-can-count-on-joe-biden-to-deliver-real-change-as-i-got-to-see-for-myself/39708794.html>.

"Joe Biden and A New Way of Governing." *Medium*. October 30, 2020. <https://medium.com/@MartinOMalley/joe-biden-and-a-new-way-of-governing-a398b48de1a7>.

"Ramping Up Efforts to Trace the Coronavirus." *Route Fifty*. June 3, 2020. <https://www.route-fifty.com/management/2020/06/efforts-trace-coronavirus/165890/>.

"What Effective Public Leaders Do to Get Ahead of a Crisis." Co-written with Andrew Feldman. *Governing*. April 2, 2020. <https://www.governing.com/now/what-effective-public-leaders-do-to-get-ahead-of-crisis.html>.

"A lot of crazy ideas come out of the woodwork in a pandemic. But this one isn't crazy." *Medium*. March 30, 2020. <https://medium.com/@MartinOMalley/a-lot-of-crazy-ideas-come-out-of-the-woodwork-in-a-pandemic-but-this-one-isnt-crazy-7a0ef11deb7c>.

"Want to fix the presidential primaries? Revive the fairness and equal time doctrines." *The Washington Post*. January 28, 2020. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/01/28/want-fix-presidential-primaries-revive-fairness-equal-time-doctrines/>.

"Data sharing crucial for good governance." *Geospatial World*. December 17, 2019. <https://www.geospatialworld.net/article/data-sharing-good-governance/>.

"Caught in the Cycle of 'Urgent Over Important'? This Leadership Strategy Can Help." Co-written with Andrew Feldman. *Route Fifty*. December 11, 2019. <https://www.route-fifty.com/management/2019/12/leadership-performancestat/161814/>.

*Smarter Government: How to Govern for Results in the Information Age*. Esri Press. 332 pages. November 5, 2019. <https://www.smartergovernment.com>.

"A lifelong friend remembers Elijah Cummings." *The American Independent*. October 31, 2019. <https://americanindependent.com/elijah-cummings-martin-omalley-baltimore-maryland-democrats-congress/>.



“The Federal Government Has Lost Our Trust. It Could Learn Something From Our Cities.” *Time*. October 18, 2019. <https://time.com/5704710/trust-government-democracy/>.

“Racist President does not know the streets of Baltimore.” *Irish Central*. July 31, 2019. <https://www.irishcentral.com/opinion/others/martin-omalley-racist-president-baltimore>.

“States must reassert authority on clean energy policy.” *Utility Dive*. March 28, 2019. <https://www.utilitydive.com/news/ex-maryland-gov-omalley-states-must-reassert-authority-on-clean-energy-po/551461/>.

“I hope Beto O’Rourke runs for president in 2020. Here’s why.” *USA Today*. January 4, 2019. <https://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/opinion/2019/01/04/martin-omalley-president-2020-beto-orourke-column/2482707002/>.

“Jerry Brown Has the Power to Save 740 Lives. He Should Use It.” Co-written with Richard Celeste, John Kitzhaber, Bill Richardson, Pat Quinn and Toney Anaya. *The New York Times*. December 13, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/13/opinion/jerry-brown-california-death-row.html>.

“Larry Hogan’s ‘real estate racket.’” *The Baltimore Sun*. October 26, 2018. <https://www.baltimoresun.com/opinion/op-ed/bs-ed-op-1029-omalley-hogan-20181025-story.html>.

“Irish America needs no lessons on liberty and decency from the Irish in Ireland.” *IrishCentral*. October 4, 2018. <https://www.irishcentral.com/news/irish-america-no-lessons-liberty-martin-omalley>.

“Governors can rebuff Trump’s refugee policy.” *Houston Chronicle*. July 5, 2018. <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/opinion/outlook/article/Governors-can-rebuff-Trump-s-refugee-policy-13051167.php>.

“When Terrorizing Children Became a Presidential Weapon of Choice.” *Medium*. June 21, 2018. <https://medium.com/@MartinOMalley/when-terrorizing-children-became-a-presidential-weapon-of-choice-cd9aa0b61513>.

“Notes from the Field.” *Medium*. June 13, 2018. <https://medium.com/@MartinOMalley/notes-from-the-field-119b3db425b8>.

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“That’s a switch—more good candidates than good workers!” *Medium*. May 2, 2018. <https://medium.com/@MartinOMalley/thats-a-switch-more-good-candidates-than-good-workers-bbb6952096ac>.

“The World Only Spins Forward.” *Medium*. April 22, 2018. <https://medium.com/@MartinOMalley/the-world-only-spins-forward-8dde1ac35784>.

“Seizing America’s Renewable Energy Future.” *New York State Green Building Conference*. April 5, 2018. [https://www-2.esf.edu/greenbuilding/2018/documents/2018NYSGBC\\_OMalley.pdf](https://www-2.esf.edu/greenbuilding/2018/documents/2018NYSGBC_OMalley.pdf).

“How many more kids have to die before States take action on gun violence?” February 19, 2018. <https://medium.com/@MartinOMalley/how-many-more-kids-have-to-die-before-states-take-action-on-gun-violence-5932dd3fbad6>.

“The Tinhorn Dictator.” *Medium*. February 9, 2018. <https://medium.com/@MartinOMalley/the-tinhorn-dictator-fc3b078be2ef>.

“Americans Deserve This Transcript.” *HuffPost*. January 11, 2018. [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/americans-deserve-this-transcript\\_b\\_5a57ab46e4b02f870f8dc39e](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/americans-deserve-this-transcript_b_5a57ab46e4b02f870f8dc39e).

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“Letters from Boston: We Shall Overcome.” *Medium*. March 6, 2017. <https://medium.com/@MartinOMalley/letters-from-boston-we-shall-overcome-efa319b6b04b>.

“Letters from Boston: Change is Inevitable.” *Medium*. February 27, 2017. <https://medium.com/@MartinOMalley/letters-from-boston-change-is-inevitable-691fd03e588c>.

“Letters from Boston: A Trout in the Milk.” *Medium*. February 14, 2017. <https://medium.com/@MartinOMalley/trout-in-the-milk-f97ca47cbe75>.

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“Pick Pete for the Democrats Future.” *Medium*. February 7, 2017. <https://medium.com/@MartinOMalley/pick-pete-for-the-democrats-future-4346ae0db244>.

“Letters from Boston: The Truth Behind ‘Sanctuary’ Cities.” *Medium*. February 6, 2017. <https://medium.com/@MartinOMalley/the-truth-behind-sanctuary-cities-a40b67f9cd15>.

“Letters from Boston: First they came for the Muslims, and we said, ‘not in America, you don’t.’” *Medium*. January 30, 2017. <https://medium.com/@MartinOMalley/first-they-came-for-the-muslims-and-we-said-not-in-america-you-dont-ad267331bf9e>.

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16. Speeches (list all formal speeches and presentations (e.g., PowerPoint) you have delivered during the past 5 years which are on topics relevant to the position for which you have been nominated, including dates):  
I have not given any speeches on Social Security in the last 5 years.
  17. Qualifications (state what, in your opinion, qualifies you to serve in the position to which you have been nominated):

I am deeply grateful to the President for nominating me to serve as Commissioner of the Social Security Administration. Because of the executive and performance management skills I have honed and practice over a lifetime of public service, I am especially well-qualified to provide Social Security—and the citizens of our country—with the collaborative, operational, customer-focused leadership the agency so desires and needs at this time in its history.

I believe that Social Security is the most far-reaching and important act of social and economic justice that the people of the United States have ever enacted. For millions of people across our country today, Social Security is the difference between living with dignity or living in poverty.

As President Ronald Reagan said when signing the bipartisan Social Security Amendments of 1983, “this bill demonstrates for all time our Nation’s iron-clad commitment to Social Security. It assures the elderly that America will always keep the promises made in troubled times a half century ago. It assures those who are still working that they, too, have a pact with the future . . . that they will get their fair share of benefits when they retire.”

But from time to time, even the most important of programs must be modernized, strengthened, and improved. That was true for Social Security in 1983 and that is true for Social Security today. With more timely, accurate information shared by all, and with a collaborative and relentless regimen of performance management, we will fulfill two critically important duties. We will improve customer service, and we will also provide Congress with the facts they require—as policymakers—to make the best budgetary and fiscal decisions for all of us.

Over the course of 15 years of executive service, I have developed a talent for improving the delivery of customer service in large public service organizations (agencies, departments, a city, a State, sometimes several States). I’ve learned how to improve the delivery of better outcomes and how to improve customer service delivery through leadership commitment, openness, transparency, and a collaborative but relentless process of performance management.

As Mayor, I learned that there is no Democrat or Republican way to fill a pothole. As Governor, I learned the biggest challenges can only be tackled with bipartisan support. But as both a Mayor and as a Governor, I developed a skill for harnessing information technology in ways that got the best out of large, siloed organizations that many—inside and outside of government—thought too unwieldy, too slow, or too steeped in excuses to change. Using 311 as a single number for all City customer service complaints. Integrating timely, accurate information from our call center and customers for continuous improvement of operations on the front lines. Mapping complaints and service fulfillments in ways so all could see not only the high performers, but the outliers and anomalies. Lifting up the leaders in an unrelenting cadence of collaborative, operational sprints every 2 weeks. These are the ways that collaborative leadership transforms organizations to achieve better results.

It was these techniques—put into practice across the enterprise of government—that earned my administration the Kennedy School’s Innovations in Government Award from Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government in 2002; and it was these techniques taken to scale at the State level which caused *Washingtonian Magazine* in 2015 to call me “probably the best manager in public office today.” Whether it was making Maryland’s Public Schools #1 in America for 5 years in a row, driving violent crime to 35-year lows, or working with other States to reverse a 300-year decline in the health of the waters of the Chesapeake Bay, the leadership practice of performance management was at the heart of it all.

The dedicated Federal and State employees whose job it is to make Social Security work for all of us, have been underappreciated and understaffed for years. Some critically important aspects of customer service like wait times on the 1-800 number and backlogs in making disability determinations have gone from bad to worse in recent years as the number of beneficiaries has grown. But with collaborative, operational leadership and a customer-centered approach, we can create a winnable game inside the agency that will result in better customer service for Americans all across our country.

As a former Governor who dealt every day with large systems, and as a manager drawn to tough challenges, I am excited by the opportunity to lead Social Security firmly and quickly into the future. I have over the years been among

and with the hardworking men and women who work for Social Security at the Headquarters in Woodlawn. Like the citizens they serve, the employees of Social Security are patriotic, dedicated, and hardworking moms and dads who want to do their jobs well and do right by the people they serve.

It would be the honor of a lifetime to lead them forward as, together, we overcome the considerable operational challenges facing the agency at this critical moment. Citizens deserve the highest level of customer service from their government. Everyone who has worked hard to earn their Social Security benefits deserves a timely response and answers to their questions. I believe Social Security is the most important and far-reaching program for social justice and the protection of individual human dignity that our Republic has ever established. Therefore, we owe it to every American to improve the level of customer service at Social Security.

#### **B. FUTURE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIPS**

1. Will you sever all connections (including participation in future benefit arrangements) with your present employers, business firms, associations, or organizations if you are confirmed by the Senate? If not, provide details.  
Yes.
2. Do you have any plans, commitments, or agreements to pursue outside employment, with or without compensation, during your service with the government? If so, provide details.  
No.
3. Has any person or entity made a commitment or agreement to employ your services in any capacity after you leave government service? If so, provide details.  
No.
4. If you are confirmed by the Senate, do you expect to serve out your full term or until the next presidential election, whichever is applicable? If not, explain.  
Yes.

#### **C. POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

1. Indicate any current and former investments, obligations, liabilities, or other personal relationships, including spousal or family employment, which could involve potential conflicts of interest in the position to which you have been nominated.

In connection with the nomination process, I have consulted with the Office of Government Ethics and the Designated Agency Ethics Official at the Social Security Administration to identify any potential conflict of interest. Any conflict of interest will be resolved in accordance with the terms of an ethics agreement that I have entered into with the Social Security Administration's Designated Agency Ethics Official and that will be provided to this committee. In the event that an actual or potential conflict of interest arises during my appointment, I will consult with the Social Security Administration's ethics counsel and take the measures necessary to resolve the conflict.

2. Describe any business relationship, dealing, or financial transaction which you have had during the last 10 years (prior to the date of your nomination), whether for yourself, on behalf of a client, or acting as an agent, that could in any way constitute or result in a possible conflict of interest in the position to which you have been nominated.

In connection with the nomination process, I have consulted with the Office of Government Ethics and the Designated Agency Ethics Official at the Social Security Administration to identify any potential conflict of interest. Any conflict of interest will be resolved in accordance with the terms of an ethics agreement that I have entered into with the Social Security Administration's Designated Agency Ethics Official and that will be provided to this committee. In the event that an actual or potential conflict of interest arises during my appointment, I will consult with the Social Security Administration's ethics counsel and take the measures necessary to resolve the conflict.

3. Describe any activity during the past 10 years (prior to the date of your nomination) in which you have engaged for the purpose of directly or indirectly influencing the passage, defeat, or modification of any legislation or affecting the administration and execution of law or public policy. Activities performed as an employee of the Federal Government need not be listed.

In 2020, I helped the musicians and supporters of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra get support from the State of Maryland.

Also, as a member of the International Commission Against the Death Penalty, I've frequently urged leaders and legislators across the globe and in the relevant States to abolish the death penalty in favor of life without possibility of parole. My writings on this topic are included in the response to #15 above.

4. Explain how you will resolve any potential conflict of interest, including any that are disclosed by your responses to the above items. (Provide the committee with two copies of any trust or other agreements.)

In connection with the nomination process, I have consulted with the Office of Government Ethics and the Designated Agency Ethics Official at the Social Security Administration to identify any potential conflict of interest. Any conflict of interest will be resolved in accordance with the terms of an ethics agreement that I have entered into with the Social Security Administration's Designated Agency Ethics Official and that will be provided to this committee. In the event that an actual or potential conflict of interest arises during my appointment, I will consult with the Social Security Administration's ethics counsel and take the measures necessary to resolve the conflict.

5. Two copies of written opinions should be provided directly to the committee by the designated agency ethics officer of the agency to which you have been nominated and by the Office of Government Ethics concerning potential conflicts of interest or any legal impediments to your serving in this position.

Provided.

#### D. LEGAL AND OTHER MATTERS

1. Have you ever been the subject of a complaint or been investigated, disciplined, or otherwise cited for a breach of ethics for unprofessional conduct before any court, administrative agency (*e.g.*, an Inspector General's office), professional association, disciplinary committee, or other ethics enforcement entity at any time? Have you ever been interviewed regarding your own conduct as part of any such inquiry or investigation? If so, provide details, regardless of the outcome.

No.

2. Have you ever been investigated, arrested, charged, or held by any Federal, State, or other law enforcement authority for a violation of any Federal, State, county, or municipal law, regulation, or ordinance, other than a minor traffic offense? Have you ever been interviewed regarding your own conduct as part of any such inquiry or investigation? If so, provide details.

In 1987, I was found not guilty at trial in the District Court of Maryland for Montgomery County after being arrested and charged with Driving Under the Influence.

In 2016, according to press reports, a spokeswoman for the Anne Arundel County State's attorney confirmed an investigation of furniture purchases after the end of my term as Governor. I am not aware of any formal investigation and no charges were ever filed.

3. Have you ever been involved as a party in interest in any administrative agency proceeding or civil litigation? If so, provide details.

As a member of the Baltimore City Council, Mayor of Baltimore City Council, and as Governor of Maryland, I was frequently and repeatedly named as a party officially and personally in numerous legal and administrative suits.

4. Have you ever been convicted (including pleas of guilty or *nolo contendere*) of any criminal violation other than a minor traffic offense? If so, provide details.

No.

5. Please advise the committee of any additional information, favorable or unfavorable, which you feel should be considered in connection with your nomination.
- None.

#### E. TESTIFYING BEFORE CONGRESS

1. If you are confirmed by the Senate, are you willing to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Congress on such occasions as you may be reasonably requested to do so?
- Yes.
2. If you are confirmed by the Senate, are you willing to provide such information as is requested by such committees?
- Yes.

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#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD TO HON. MARTIN J. O'MALLEY

##### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.

*Question.* In recent years, SSA has made important advances in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of communications with beneficiaries, which is critical to accomplishing the long-term mission of the agency. However, SSA still relies on out-of-date technology, from printers to phone systems. Investment in modern technology is needed to improve service delivery, decrease costs, and increase efficiency. Such investments would improve the day-to-day experience of our Federal workforce and make it easier possible for them to serve recipients in a more timely and efficient manner.

As Commissioner of SSA, how will you support modernization plans that leverage technology to better serve beneficiaries, reduce costs, and improve the experience of the Federal workforce?

*Answer.* I appreciate the opportunity to highlight a few points about how I would leverage and modernize technology at SSA, if confirmed. First and foremost, I believe that it is critical up front—from the very beginning of the design process—to center two groups of people: the customers, and the front-line workers who will be directly using the system. There is no use designing a system that doesn't effectively serve customers the way they want to be served, or that produces inefficiencies and impedes front-line workers from doing their jobs effectively.

Second, we need to make sure that we have the best people not only from within SSA, but also from across the Federal Government—such as from partnering with the U.S. Digital Service—and beyond. Third, I learned early in my career the importance of having an independent firm to do robust independent verification and validation (IV&V), to prevent and reduce overruns and delays.

If confirmed, I look forward to applying this approach in service of improving SSA's technology and operations.

*Question.* Despite great challenges, the Social Security Administration rates high in public trust, but the agency has been starved of resources, leaving staffing at a 25-year low. This understaffing has led to employee burnout and high rates of turnover. According to a study from the American Federation of Government Employees, which represents 42,000 SSA employees, 50 percent of SSA employees are considering leaving the agency within the next year.

How will you improve employee recruitment and retention? How do you plan to rebuild employee morale at the agency in addition to technology upgrades?

*Answer.* I think that as a new leader, it is important to listen to what employees have to say about what's going wrong before diving in to fix things. If confirmed, I plan to engage directly with SSA employees at all levels, as well as with stakeholders such as employee unions, to listen to their concerns and develop ways to address them. With transparency and openness, we can begin to rebuild trust—both the trust that employees have in their agency's leadership, and the trust that American people have in this great program of Social Security.

The agency is working with a challenging set of constraints that will not go away overnight, but I do believe making sure that leadership is listening to and understands staff perspectives goes a long way toward improving morale and retention.

I have no doubt that the hardworking, patriotic, and dedicated SSA employees are up to this moment, and I would be proud to lead them forward.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. RON WYDEN

*Question.* My office and other offices throughout Congress often hear from advocates who represent stakeholders for many of the programs administered by SSA. In the past, advocates had a standing quarterly meeting with the Commissioner, and both SSA and the advocates found these meetings to be very productive in communicating changes and getting “on the ground” information, including policy and practice reform recommendations.

If confirmed, will you resume these quarterly meetings with the advocacy community?

*Answer.* Yes. If confirmed, I want to meet regularly with Social Security’s stakeholders. That certainly includes the advocacy and beneficiary communities. These regular stakeholder meetings will help me see new perspectives on Social Security and understand all of the different considerations that go into SSA’s work.

*Question.* In April 2021, I convened a hearing to examine SSA’s performance during the COVID-19 pandemic and to discuss strategies to improve service delivery going forward. One lesson we learned from the pandemic is that Social Security requires a lot of in-person visits even for simple and straightforward transactions to verify a person’s identity. SSA already deploys strategies to reduce in-person field office visits, such as leveraging data exchanges with Federal and State agencies and creating an online portal for customers to submit SSA forms and documents online.

By reducing in-person requirements for services, it would reduce wait times for everyone and allow front-line staff to dedicate more resources to those who need in-person assistance or do not have reliable access to the Internet. If confirmed, will you prioritize reducing requirements for in-person visits?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will prioritize comprehensively reviewing SSA’s operations and customer service, and seeking ways to make the agency more effective, both for members of the public and for SSA’s employees. As part of that review, I look forward to examining the reasons that in-person visits might be required and assessing whether any changes are warranted.

*Question.* Over the past several years, SSA has been modernizing its back-end technology infrastructure to support its front-line staff by reducing administrative barriers and shortening processing times. SSA is preparing to begin its next phase of technology modernization, focusing on customer-facing systems. This has been a top priority for me, as it would reduce field office foot traffic and allow front-line staff to dedicate more resources to those who need in-person assistance.

Throughout your time in public service, you have been a leader in harnessing technology to improve customer service in the public sector. What is your general philosophy for IT modernization, and how you would approach prioritizing various IT projects if confirmed?

*Answer.* I appreciate the opportunity to highlight a few points about my IT modernization philosophy as I would apply it at SSA, if confirmed. First and foremost, it is critical up front—from the very beginning of the design process—to center two groups of people: the customers, and the front-line workers who will be directly using the system. There is no use designing a system that doesn’t effectively serve customers the way they want to be served, or that produces inefficiencies and impedes front-line workers from doing their jobs effectively.

Second, we need to make sure that we have the best people not only from within SSA, but also from across the Federal Government—such as from partnering with the U.S. Digital Service—and beyond. Third, I learned early in my career the importance of having an independent firm to do robust independent verification and validation (IV&V), to prevent and reduce overruns and delays.

If confirmed, I look forward to applying this approach in service of improving SSA’s technology and operations. To prioritize among projects, I would look to assessments of which ones would have the most impact or get the most “bang for the buck” in terms of improving SSA’s customer service.

*Question.* In 2011, the Social Security Administration was ranked as one of the best places to work in the Federal Government by the Office of Personnel Manage-

ment Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS). However, earlier this year, the Social Security Administration was ranked as the worst place to work among large agencies. I am concerned with the agency's ability to recruit and retain quality staff, which will have a significant impact on the agency's ability to modernize its systems, process claims, and otherwise serve the American people.

What is your plan to restore employee morale?

Answer. I think that as a new leader, it is important to listen to what employees have to say about what's going wrong before diving in to fix things. If confirmed, I plan to engage directly with SSA employees at all levels, as well as with stakeholders such as employee unions, to listen to their concerns and develop ways to address them. With transparency and openness, we can begin to rebuild trust—both the trust that employees have in their agency's leadership, and the trust that American people have in this great program of Social Security.

The agency is working with a challenging set of constraints that will not go away overnight, but I do believe making sure that leadership is listening to and understands staff perspectives goes a long way toward improving morale. I have no doubt that the hard-working, patriotic, and dedicated SSA employees are up to this moment, and I would be proud to lead them forward.

*Question.* As you may know, the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program provides critical support for some of our most vulnerable communities. However, individuals seeking to apply for SSI benefits face significant administrative barriers to accessing this lifeline. The current SSI application form stretches over 20 pages long and cannot be completed online. Senators Brown, Casey, and I have urged the agency to prioritize simplifying the SSI application and to make it accessible online.

If confirmed, will you prioritize simplifying the SSI application and making it available online for applicants?

Answer. It is my strong belief that if someone is eligible for benefits, they should be able to get them. They should not face long wait times for an appointment, nor should they face incomprehensible application forms and unnecessary red tape. If confirmed, I look forward to assessing the agency's plans for SSI simplification and online applications, and seeing where we can accelerate or strengthen them. This is a key priority.

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#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. JOHN BARRASSO

*Question.* As someone who served in political positions for many years, you have taken public stances on numerous policy matters, including issues facing the Social Security Administration. The role of the Social Security Commissioner has historically been an administrative position and one that is nonpartisan. It has not been a role where the Commissioner acts as an outspoken "advocate."

Do you commit to setting aside your political and personal policy agenda in order to carry out the mission and role of the agency?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, my focus would be on managing the agency and providing the best customer service to the American people. I believe the Commissioner's role in any major reform effort is to provide the best information and most accurate numbers to Congress and the President as they evaluate policy choices. I would advocate for the agency, but not for or against policies.

*Question.* As Commissioner of the SSA, would you promote some of the payroll tax increase proposals you advocated for in the past?

Answer. I am no longer a candidate for elected office. My role as Commissioner—if confirmed—would not be to promote any particular policy proposal but rather to improve the operations and customer service at the agency.

I support the President's budget, which reaffirms the administration's commitment to protecting and strengthening the Social Security program and pledges to work with Congress to strengthen Social Security by ensuring high-income individuals pay their fair share.

*Question.* I have worked in a bipartisan manner for the last decade in sponsoring the Expedited Disability Insurance Payments for Terminally Ill Individuals Act. Individuals who are given less than 6 months to live are currently forced to wait more than 5 months to receive their Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits.

Our bipartisan bill will ensure people with terminal illnesses receive disability benefits in a timely manner while still preserving the integrity of the system.

What are your views on the need to streamline and expedite SSDI benefits for terminally ill individuals?

Answer. If confirmed, as Commissioner my focus will be on effectively administering the SSDI program under current law, and on providing timely customer service to the American people. I look forward to learning more about the ways that SSA currently expedites benefit approval in certain situations, including for some individuals with terminal illnesses, and to examining whether there are ways to improve this process.

*Question.* Will you commit to working with my office, including providing technical assistance as needed, on the Expedited Disability Insurance Payments for Terminally Ill Individuals Act?

Answer. Yes. I have committed that, if confirmed, I will work to provide the best information and most accurate numbers possible to Congress and the President as they evaluate policy choices. I would be happy to provide technical assistance on this bill and any others you may be considering.

*Question.* You have made it clear that you were aware of some of the issues plaguing the Social Security Administration. You flagged long wait times for phone and in-person service. You also mentioned issues with disability determinations. For example, the average time from application to initial decision on disability claims has nearly doubled from 120 days before the pandemic, to now more than 220 days.

What are your high-level plans for carrying out performance management and improving customer service?

Answer. SSA faces a customer service crisis. The current wait times, backlogs, and delays are simply unacceptable, and we must do better. It is my strong belief that the public deserves the highest level of customer service from their government. We owe it to every American to improve the level of customer service at Social Security so people can get answers to their questions and get their benefit applications decided in a timely manner.

I believe I was nominated for this position because I have the leadership skills, the management skills, and the experience needed at this moment to lead SSA forward. I wholeheartedly commit to making customer service improvements a top priority, starting with improving phone service and reducing disability delays. If confirmed, I plan to comprehensively review the agency's customer service plans, assess how we can improve them, and then move quickly to implement those improvements and measure their success.

*Question.* How do you plan to track and improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability in the SSA organization? and What ideas do you have for tracking and quantifying improvements to the effectiveness and efficiency of the agency, as well as ideas for instilling accountability in the SSA organization?

Answer. As both a Mayor and as a Governor, I developed a discipline for harnessing data and information technology in ways that got the best out of large, siloed organizations of people that many—inside and outside of government—thought too unwieldy, too slow, or too steeped in excuses to change. One of the ways I've learned to do this is by bringing people together in a regular cadence to review the data and measure performance—creating both accountability and collaboration. If confirmed, I look forward to applying these strategies, and others, toward improving SSA's customer service.

*Question.* In 1994, Congress passed the Social Security Independence and Program Improvement Act. This bill established a bipartisan Social Security Advisory Board. Members of the Board are appointed by Congress and the White House. The Board consists of outside experts who help make recommendations in how best to administer and strengthen Social Security. They make suggestions to help improve service quality and performance. They advise not only the administration and the Commissioner, but also Congress, and even help educate the public. They can be a valuable resource to help carry out the mission of the Social Security Administration.

If you are confirmed, what are your plans to engage with the Social Security Advisory Board? Will you plan to consult with the Advisory Board on ways to improve the Social Security Administration?



Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will engage and consult with the Social Security Advisory Board to gain their expertise and their perspectives on how to improve SSA's customer service. I believe hearing a range of perspectives—and truly listening to the input—is invaluable for understanding and improving the operations of any complex program, and that will certainly be how I approach my role at SSA.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. BILL CASSIDY

*Question.* It is my understanding that SSA used to publish clear productivity data online in their annual “Performance and Accountability Reports” until 2002. These reports provided productivity data points like “cost per retirement claim.” Until recently, SSA only had “Agency Financial Reports” available online since 2014, which provide very little performance data and mainly focus on output data. After our meeting, SSA did put a few more reports back up on their website, and I want to thank you for that great first step.

In recent years, when asking Congress for more money for operations, SSA has been relying on “output data,” as opposed to “performance data.” In other words, SSA has been using the Golden Arches (McDonald's) model of data dissemination to lobby for money (*i.e.*, “Millions and Millions Served”). SSA has also been comparing funds received by Congress to employee headcount, and going to interest groups and the media to try to justify and lobby for funding increases. Other organizations doing similar work have successfully increased productivity via the use of technology and improved processes, without needing to focus as heavily on increased staffing.

Would you be willing to work with Congress and the Social Security Advisory Board to compile a reliable set of historical SSA performance metrics so Congress can better understand how SSA uses its allocated funding? If so, when could we expect this to be completed?

Answer. I share your interest in useful data and metrics, and I look forward to diving into SSA's data if confirmed. As both a Mayor and as a Governor, I developed a discipline for harnessing data and information technology in ways that got the best out of large, siloed organizations of people that many—inside and outside of government—thought too unwieldy, too slow, or too steeped in excuses to change. One of the ways I've learned to do this is by bringing people together in a regular cadence to review the data and measure performance—creating both accountability and collaboration. And these reviews certainly need to include data that indicate performance, tactics, and strategies, not just final outputs.

If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing this data and examining ways to make it more useful to Congress and others. I would be glad to work with you and with the Social Security Advisory Board on this. I would hope to provide some top-line performance metrics within 90 days depending on the availability of historic data.

*Question.* Louisiana was one of 10 States that was part of a pilot program that eliminated the reconsideration step of the Social Security disability application process. When Congress allowed SSA to end this pilot program in 2019, SSA promised to provide research on the effect of this change to Congress. However, this data was never provided. After this change, the disability application backlog in Louisiana has ballooned, creating situations where some applicants experienced waits that grew by over a year on top of what the previously too long wait times were prior to the change. There are a number of disability applicants in Louisiana who are dying before they get a chance to have their case heard before an administrative law judge—that is simply unacceptable.

Since the data on this change is easily available to SSA researchers, this should be a pretty easy report for the agency to complete. Will you commit to providing a full report on the effect of ending the 10-State Reconsideration Pilot Project to Congress within 6 months of your confirmation?

Answer. I have pledged that, if I am confirmed, I will immediately review the entire disability program from start to finish, and work with agency experts and other stakeholders to explore options for improving the entire process. I fully expect that this review will include looking at the effects that reinstating the reconsideration step has had on both applicants and the agency, and I will report to Congress on this matter within 6 months of my confirmation.

## QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. MIKE CRAPO

*Question.* During your nomination hearing, you stated that it is Congress's prerogative to make policy decisions about improving Social Security's solvency and that you "would not step on that prerogative." However, in response to questioning, you also seemed to express your opposition to a policy dial that has been debated in Social Security solvency proposals. If confirmed, do you commit that you will not weigh in on policy decisions beyond providing Congress with information about the program's finances and the estimated financial effects of various policy options?

*Answer.* I do. My intent was not to weigh in on a specific policy dial, but rather to provide our Nation's duly elected policymakers—such as you and your colleagues on the Senate Finance Committee—with the best information you need to make policy decisions on Social Security.

*Question.* In your testimony and responses to questions, you discussed many of the operational and customer service challenges facing the Social Security Administration. If confirmed, how specifically will you determine which key indicators to track to determine if the tactics and strategies in place are working to improve operations and customer service? Please detail the considerations that will factor into these decisions.

*Answer.* As both a Mayor and as a Governor, I developed a discipline for harnessing data and information technology in ways that got the best out of large, siloed organizations of people that many—inside and outside of government—thought too unwieldy, too slow, or too steeped in excuses to change. One of the ways I've learned to do this is by bringing people together in a regular cadence to review the data and measure performance—creating both accountability and collaboration.

Regarding specific key indicators, I look forward to diving into SSA's data, if confirmed. I can tell you that from where I sit right now, it appears to me that SSA's lagging performance indicators—such as call wait times and delays for applicants—are clear; what's not clear is the tactics and strategies needed to combat them. By mapping the current process and listening critically to the suggestions for improvement from front-line managers and workers, we will prioritize the leading actions which bring about the greatest value to improve the customer journey and the efficiency of workflows. Useful indicators need to not just be easily measured and monitored, but must also be *meaningful* gauges of what's happening. If confirmed, I aim to harness the agency's data to actually measure the strategies, not just the outcomes—and then to build on that information to improve customer service.

*Question.* Given the amount of information and range of services available behind the *My Social Security* online portal, it is crucial that the Social Security Administration's digital identity verification process complies with Federal requirements. The SSA Office of the Inspector General recently found that the SSA's digital identity verification controls for the *My Social Security* portal do not fully meet Federal standards. If confirmed, how would you ensure that the SSA's digital identity verification processes meet all necessary standards going forward?

*Answer.* SSA's online services are an important part of the agency's service to the public, and I am committed to continuing to improve them. While I am not an expert on digital identity, if confirmed, I look forward to working with the relevant experts at SSA and across the Federal Government to review the current processes and standards, as well as the OIG report, and to seek improvements where warranted. I aim to hold the agency to high standards across the board, and I believe we can deliver on that.

## QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. STEVE DAINES

*Question.* Thousands of Montanans rely on Social Security payments, but unfortunately, we hear all too often the struggles they have getting assistance from the Social Security Administration (SSA), including long wait times to speak to a representative and navigating the website.

If you are confirmed, what steps will you take to address the customer service challenges facing SSA?

*Answer.* I share your concerns with SSA's customer service crisis. The current wait times, backlogs, and delays are simply unacceptable, and we must do better. It is my strong belief that the public deserves the highest level of customer service from their government. We owe it to every American to improve the level of cus-

tomer service at Social Security so people can get answers to their questions and get their benefit applications decided in a timely manner.

I believe I was nominated for this position because I have the leadership skills, the management skills, and the experience needed at this moment to lead SSA forward. I wholeheartedly commit to making customer service improvements a top priority. If confirmed, I plan to comprehensively review the agency's customer service plans, assess how we can improve them, and then move quickly to implement those improvements and measure their success.

As both a Mayor and as a Governor, I developed a discipline for harnessing data and information technology in ways that got the best out of large, siloed organizations of people that many—inside and outside of government—thought too unwieldy, too slow, or too steeped in excuses to change. One of the ways I've learned to do this is by bringing people together in a regular cadence to review the data and measure performance—creating both accountability and collaboration. If confirmed, I look forward to applying these strategies, and others, toward improving SSA's customer service.

*Question.* SSA relies on their information technology (IT) infrastructure to provide individuals their benefits and as you said in your hearing, “keep the trains running on time.”

How will you determine what IT changes need to be implemented at SSA and ensure that any technology modernizations will be effective and not interfere with individuals receiving their benefits?

*Answer.* First and foremost, I believe that it is critical up front—from the very beginning of the technology modernization or design process—to center two groups of people: the customers, and the front-line workers who will be directly using the system. There is no use designing a system that doesn't effectively serve customers the way they want to be served, or that produces inefficiencies and impedes front-line workers from doing their jobs effectively. Not only should any changes “not interfere” with individuals receiving their benefits, as you said, but the changes should actually *improve* individuals' ability to receive prompt, accurate, and responsive service from SSA.

*Question.* If you are confirmed for this position, you will be at the front lines of all aspects of Social Security, including solvency. In your testimony, you mentioned that your job includes providing Congress data, evidence, and information for legislative solutions to be developed.

What concrete steps will you take to ensure members of Congress receive both accurate and comprehensive metrics in a timely fashion?

*Answer.* As you noted, I have pledged that—if confirmed—I will ensure that you and your colleagues in Congress receive the best information possible to facilitate your policy decisions and deliberations on Social Security. While I do not know at this time what specific steps will be needed, I look forward to working with you and your colleagues on this. I hope that by providing timely and accurate information, we can protect a spirit of trust, civility, and honesty in these discussions.

In addition, I have long been a strong believer in timely, accurate data *shared by all*. I've found in my past experience that a focus on data for all, combined with regular accountability and collaboration, helps to create a winnable game for employees and improve performance across the board, even—especially—in large agencies.

*Question.* The telework policy at SSA has been at the forefront of many conversations surrounding staffing at the administration and how it functions on the whole.

Please provide specific data you will use when evaluating SSA's telework policy and in determining how and when employees should return to work.

*Answer.* I believe strongly that if someone wants a face-to-face meeting with a Social Security employee to claim their benefits or for any other reason, they should be able to get one. In my view, that must be the key test of the agency's telework policies. In addition to that key metric, SSA's telework policies must also support its recruitment and retention needs, because adequate staffing is key to the ability to improve customer service.

## QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. JAMES LANKFORD

*Question.* I have previously raised the distinction between administrative law judges (ALJs) and administrative appeals judges (AAJs) in the appeals process and the increasing backlog at the Social Security Administration (SSA). Stakeholders have raised structural and due process concerns, particularly that AAJs are not bound to follow APA procedures and do not have the same job protections designed to encourage independent decision-making.

What is your viewpoint on the use of administrative law judges (ALJs) versus administrative appeal judges (AAJs)?

*Answer.* I am not yet familiar with the particulars of these two roles, but if confirmed, I look forward to learning more about them from experts at SSA and beyond. I can tell you that it is my strong belief that the public deserves the highest level of customer service from their government, including the appropriate due process rights and an appropriate structure for deciding disability claims. If confirmed, I will review the disability adjudication process from start to finish, and will work with agency experts and other stakeholders to explore options for improving the entire process, including the appropriate roles of ALJs and AAJs.

*Question.* From your perspective, what oversight or process reform is needed to root out ALJs who have a high over-turn rate on appeals or denials? Additionally, how will you appropriately work with the Office of Inspector General on such matters?

*Answer.* As noted above, I have committed to review the disability adjudication process from start to finish, and to work with agency experts and other stakeholders to explore options for improving the entire process. I plan to use data and metrics in this review in order to identify anomalies and hold individuals accountable for their performance.

If confirmed, I also look forward to learning more about SSA's existing partnership with the Office of Inspector General, and examining how it can be strengthened. My intent is to partner closely with the OIG in service of improving SSA's effectiveness and stewardship of the trust funds.

## QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. TIM SCOTT

*Question.* I would like to discuss the Social Security Administration's (SAA) work to prevent synthetic identity fraud. Criminals create a synthetic identity by combining Social Security numbers (SSNs), names, and birth dates of multiple people or by combining real information about a single person with fabricated information. A criminal uses this identity to apply for credit and eventually will be successful, building a credit profile over time, and finally, obtaining a large amount of credit, with no intent to repay ruining credit scores and lives. A frequent target of this fraud is children, as most parents are not checking their child's credit reports and the child's SSN is rarely used. This fraud is reported to be the fastest growing type of financial crime. Synthetic identity fraud is more prevalent in the U.S. than in other countries due in part to a strong reliance on SSNs as identifiers.

Therefore, SSA holds the key to stopping this fraud. SSA's Electronic Consent Based SSN Verification ("eCBSV") system is aimed to do just that. It provides financial institutions, and their service providers, the ability to get a real-time response as to whether the name, SSN, and date of birth submitted to the financial institution match SSA's records. If there is no match, that is an indication that it may be a case of synthetic identity fraud. However, sometimes the "no match" is due to a simple typo or the use of a nickname instead of a legal name.

Under your leadership, is SSA committed to continuing eCBSV and working with the financial services industry (and other industries) to improve the system to be more effective and efficient?

*Answer.* Yes. I am a strong believer in working collaboratively with stakeholders. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about eCBSV and working collaboratively with stakeholders across industry and Congress to make sure the system is working effectively and efficiently.

*Question.* There are estimates that 1 million children every year are victims of identity fraud, and another estimate that 10 percent of all people under the age of 18 have been victims of identity fraud. Congress's directive to SSA to create a real-time synthetic identity fraud prevention platform (eCBSV) and using this platform

protects consumers and saves millions of dollars. One bank estimates that use of the eCBSV saved over \$110 million in credit card and deposit account fraud in 2022 alone. With this congressional mandate and as the issuer of SSNs, do you agree that part of SSA's mission is preventing synthetic identity fraud through the operation of eCBSV?

Answer. SSA's mission is providing Social Security and Supplemental Security Income benefits to millions of Americans, as well as faithfully executing other responsibilities in the law. If confirmed, I am committed to carrying out that mission, including operating the eCBSV program.

*Question.* SSA's eCBSV system is working as Congress intended, with one bank reporting that it saved \$70 million in fraud prevention in the first year of using the system. Congress dictated that SSA's costs to build and operate the eCBSV system be fully recovered from the users of the system. That law did not mandate the period of time to recover funds, although it is acknowledged that Appropriations law does require the agency to recover funds within 6 years of expenditure.

Unfortunately, SSA has decided to accelerate the time frame to recover the costs. To do that, SSA has substantially increased the fees for using the system, with some users being asked to pay more than 22 times what they originally paid, for the exact same system. There are serious concerns that unless SSA makes substantial adjustments to the cost recovery plan, current and future users will be deterred from using this system.

Will you commit to working with the current and future users of the system as well as Congress on extending the time frame for cost recovery to ensure eCBSV is effective as possible?

Answer. If confirmed, I plan to review the current eCBSV operations and policies, and assess whether changes are needed. I look forward to working with current and future users of the system as well as with Congress as I do so. I am a strong believer in working collaboratively with stakeholders, and I expect that the feedback will be useful in assessing eCBSV to make sure it is working as effectively as possible.

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#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. JOHN THUNE

*Question.* SSA customer service backlog: I have heard from hundreds of constituents about their frustrations with long wait times and unanswered calls to SSA's customer service phone line. Even SSA's own work plan states that the speed of answering calls is estimated to increase this year to 35 minutes and the busy rate will increase to 15 percent. SSA has stated that "providing quality service to the public is critical to our mission" yet customers continue to experience long wait times and delays in getting the help they need with their benefits.

If you are confirmed, how will you work to address these long wait times and delays the public is experiencing? Can you commit to reducing call wait times and reducing the busy rate?

Answer. I share your concerns. As I said in my testimony, SSA faces a customer service crisis. The current wait times, backlogs, and delays are simply unacceptable, and we must do better. It is my strong belief that the public deserves the highest level of customer service from their government. We owe it to every American to improve the level of customer service at Social Security so people can get answers to their questions and get their benefit applications decided in a timely manner.

I believe I was nominated for this position because I have the leadership skills, the management skills, and the experience needed at this moment to lead SSA forward. I wholeheartedly commit to making customer service improvements my top priority, starting with improving phone service and reducing disability delays. If confirmed, I plan to comprehensively review the agency's customer service plans, assess how we can improve them, and then move quickly to implement those improvements and measure their success.

*Question.* SSA in-person offices: While I understand a number of Social Security services can be accessed online, there are still services that are not available online, where a person must visit an office in-person. Earlier this year, a constituent reached out to my office because their closest Social Security office in Pierre, SD was not offering in-person services, even though they had a person on staff. This office has not offered in-person services since March 2020. When I inquired with So-

cial Security, they informed me that even with the end of the public health emergency, they still did not offer in-person services at this location. As you know, South Dakota is a very rural State so when this office is closed, individuals have to drive hours to the next nearest location.

If you are confirmed, what will you do to ensure there is adequate staffing at Social Security offices? Can you commit to offering in-person services at offices, like the one in Pierre?

Answer. I believe strongly that if someone wants a face-to-face meeting with a Social Security employee to claim their benefits or for any other reason, they should be able to get one. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the specific situation in Pierre and working with you to find a path forward to serve your constituents.

*Question.* SSA overpayments: Social Security's most recent reports estimate that SSA made \$13.6 billion in improper payments in FY 2022. According to OIG, improper payments are occurring for a number of reasons, but often it is due to a reliance on manual processes and insufficient or incorrect data. Improper payments have a detrimental impact on the fiscal stability of the program and on beneficiaries who may owe back payments or have been underpaid. The OIG has made hundreds of recommendations to address improper payments but of 299 recommendations made in the past 5 years, there are 76 outstanding recommendations.

If confirmed, how will you address the issue of improper payments?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about how SSA prevents and addresses improper payments, and about the status of the outstanding OIG recommendations. I am committed to improving SSA's operations by focusing on frequent, in-depth, operational reviews of what's working and what's not, and by listening to the front-line employees who are doing the work.

As both a Mayor and as a Governor, I developed a discipline for harnessing data and information technology in ways that got the best out of large, siloed organizations of people that many—inside and outside of government—thought too unwieldy, too slow, or too steeped in excuses to change. If confirmed, I look forward to implementing similar changes at SSA in ways that I hope and expect would help reduce improper payments.

*Question.* UI and SSDI duplicate payments: In past presidential budget requests, administrations of both parties have requested that Congress address the issue of overlapping payments of unemployment insurance and SSDI.

Is this a problem that you are aware of and, if so, do you have a sense as to how common these instances of duplicative payments are?

Answer. I am aware of this issue. According to the Congressional Research Service,<sup>1</sup> SSA "estimates that for each month in 2015, an average of about 0.34 percent of disabled-worker beneficiaries" received both SSDI and UI (approximately 30,000 people). If confirmed, I stand ready to work with you and your colleagues on this issue and provide any data and information requested.

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#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. TODD YOUNG

*Question.* One of the issues my team continues to hear from constituents on is the time it takes for the SSA to approve individuals to receive SSDI benefits. It often takes months for individuals to hear back from the agency initially, and many times it is only for them to be denied. Then, once someone is finally approved to receive SSDI, it also takes the payment centers additional time (often months) to determine the level of monthly benefit the individual should receive.

As an example, one of my constituents from Greensburg, IN was favorably awarded SSDI in January and they are still awaiting benefits nearly 10 months later.

If confirmed, how would you aim to address this issue and help ensure SSDI recipients are approved and receive their benefits in a timely fashion?

Answer. I share your concerns. As I said in my testimony, SSA faces a customer service crisis. The current wait times, backlogs, and delays are simply unacceptable, and we must do better. It is my strong belief that the public deserves the highest

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<sup>1</sup><https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R43471/7>.

level of customer service from their government. We owe it to every American to improve the level of customer service at Social Security so people can get answers to their questions and get their benefit applications decided in a timely manner.

I believe I was nominated for this position because I have the leadership skills, the management skills, and the experience needed at this moment to lead SSA forward. I wholeheartedly commit to making customer service improvements my top priority, starting with reducing disability delays and improving phone service. If confirmed, I plan to review the disability adjudication process from start to finish, and will work with agency experts and other stakeholders to explore options for improving the entire process.

*Question.* Will you commit to working with my office to resolve cases, such as the one I've noted above, in a timely fashion?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I look forward to working with your office to ensure cases such as this one are resolved in a timely fashion.

*Question.* During your nominations hearing you noted that "the main test for if we have staffing right in the field offices is whether people who want face-to-face meetings can get them."

The day after your nominations hearing, my office was contacted by a constituent from Elkhart, IN who visited the SSA field office looking for help enrolling and managing her Medicare Part A benefits. She was advised to make an online appointment, but requested the opportunity to work with a representative in person. The clerk told her that she was unable to schedule an in-person appointment. Furthermore, the clerk was unable to set up an appointment via the phone before the end of the year and the 2024 schedule apparently isn't available at this time. This is of particular concern given the limited time an individual has to enroll. Whether it be as a result of workforce shortages, insufficient telework policies, or a combination of both, constituents in my State who want face-to-face meetings currently cannot get them.

If confirmed, how will you ensure that people who want face-to-face meetings are able to schedule those appointments in a timely manner?

Answer. It is my strong belief that the public deserves the highest level of customer service from their government—and that is clearly not what your constituent received. We owe it to every American to improve the level of customer service at Social Security so people can conduct their business and get in-person appointments in a timely manner. If confirmed, I will examine in detail what the problems are, how we got to this point, and will develop a comprehensive plan to improve customer service, including the ability to schedule face-to-face appointments in a timely manner.

*Question.* A 2022 Office of the Inspector General report noted that in fiscal year 2021, the agency reported \$21.6 billion in unrecovered overpayments.<sup>2</sup> This includes individuals who were incorrectly granted excess survivor benefits as minors. These overpayments are then not realized until the individuals are able to withdrawal from their Social Security benefits, often decades later.

As an example, one of my constituents from Fishers, IN received survivor benefits upon his mother's death in 1980. The agency continued to send benefits to this individual's father on his behalf for 5 months after he turned 18. Forty-three years later, he now owes the agency over \$2,000 as a result of those overpayments. This individual's only income is SSDI, and he is now struggling to pay the agency back. My office often hears stories like this, where retired individuals struggling to make ends meet are hit with exorbitant back payments *decades* after the initial benefits were incorrectly received.

If confirmed, how will you ensure that the agency is correctly distributing benefits and avoiding a large backlog of overpayments?

Answer. I have seen similar reports about beneficiaries experiencing overpayments and the hardships they experience as a result, and I share your concerns. If confirmed, I plan to look into this and see what we can do to better protect beneficiaries, in addition to protecting the Social Security trust funds. As you noted, by improving the agency's accuracy and service, some overpayments may be preventable—which would be a win both for beneficiaries and for the agency. I look forward

<sup>2</sup> <https://oig.ssa.gov/assets/uploads/a-02-21-51120.pdf>.

to working with the Office of the Inspector General and others on these important improvements.

*Question.* On October 30th, the Biden administration released an executive order (EO) titled the “Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy Development and Use of Artificial Intelligence.” Most notably, the EO directs the Office of Management and Budget to provide recommendations to agencies to streamline artificial intelligence (AI) acquisitions, provide guidance on appropriate internal uses of AI, and “plan a national surge in AI talent in government.” As a major purchaser of AI technology, the Federal Government has the opportunity to shape industry-wide adoption of safe AI systems.

What are your views on AI?

*Answer.* I am not an expert on the rapidly evolving AI field, but I look forward to learning more from experts at SSA and beyond. On this and other technology issues, it is critical that we make sure that we have the best people not only from within SSA, but also from across the Federal Government—such as from partnering with the U.S. Digital Service—and beyond.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you approach decisions related to the implementation of AI technology?

*Answer.* As I said, I am not an expert in AI, but I look forward to learning from those who are. As an operational leader, I recognize that I don’t need to have all of the answers; if I can ask the right questions of the right people, we can move forward together. I have said before that my top priority and my North Star at SSA, if I am confirmed, will be improving customer service; that goal will guide my decisions.

*Question.* In your testimony, you noted that one of your primary focuses will be improving customer service at the SSA and that the agency “needs to be open to the private sector and the things they’re already doing that we can learn from.” You also highlighted that you “will need to do a rapid assessment of systems, the alignment of those systems” and in doing so, the customer will be in the forefront of your mind.

Today the SSA utilizes multiple credential service providers to verify users’ identities when opening a *My Social Security* account. These providers are responsible for providing both the user with a pathway to securely prove their identity and the SSA with the assurance that the owner of the account is legitimate. Therefore, understanding the security and efficacy of their support of SSA’s services at log-in is essential.

If confirmed, will you provide an assessment of the performance of these providers at the SSA and provide specific data on consumer experience and fraud mitigation, with relevant recommendations to the committee?

*Answer.* Yes, I will provide the committee with data and information on these topics following my reviews. I am not an expert on the rapidly evolving digital identity field, but I look forward to learning more from SSA and other relevant experts, and then assessing whether SSA’s digital identity providers are meeting the needs of the agency and the public.

*Question.* Will you commit to making data-driven decisions about SSA’s customer-facing systems, provide choice to users, and ensure that those options are as user-friendly and secure as possible?

*Answer.* Yes, I will gladly commit to this. I have decades of experience in harnessing data to make data-driven decisions at large agencies, and I look forward to doing the same at SSA, if I am confirmed. Regarding technology, it is my strong belief that technology systems must be designed with two groups of people front and center from the very start: the customers, and the front-line employees who will be using the system.

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. RON WYDEN,  
A U.S. SENATOR FROM OREGON

This morning we are meeting to consider the nomination of Governor Martin O’Malley to be Commissioner of Social Security Administration.

Before we get to Governor O’Malley, I want to welcome our most esteemed former colleague, a giant of the Senate and Maryland’s matriarch, Barbara Mikulski. I have



known Senator Mikulski for over 20 years, and for our colleagues who did not have the pleasure of serving with her in the Senate: if Barbara is on your side, you're running with the right crowd.

Now to Governor O'Malley. I want to thank you for your willingness to serve in this distinguished role, and a lifetime of public service.

Over his career in public service, Governor O'Malley built a world-class reputation for harnessing technology to deliver transformative change to government services on behalf of Marylanders. As Mayor of Baltimore, he established the Nation's first 311 call center, serving as Baltimorean's one-stop shop for all city services. As Governor, he "threw open the doors of government" and created an open web portal allowing all Marylanders to monitor the State's performance in serving the public in real time.

With a track record like that, I am not surprised the President nominated him to serve, because that is what's sorely needed at the Social Security Administration.

SSA is responsible for administering benefits to over 70 million seniors, people with disabilities, surviving spouses, and other Americans who earned their benefits with every paycheck. Colleagues, it is no secret that SSA has had its share of difficulties, and it has received significant media attention when the agency has fallen short of its mission—from long lines stretched around field offices, telephone systems crashing, outdated technology and systems, and most concerning, low staff morale. These criticisms are fair, and I, along with many members on both sides of the dais, have gone after waste, fraud, and abuse to ensure that taxpayer dollars are used wisely and to improve customer service.

That said, with the power of the purse and the pen, we in Congress need to take responsibility here as well. SSA's performance—both its successes and failures—is inextricably linked to the tools and resources we provide to the agency. It is not surprising that customer service performance and staff morale improved as funding levels rose. It is also not surprising that backlogs and wait times grew as funding levels fell.

SSA's budget has been through the ringer over the last decade. Since 2010, SSA's budget has fallen by 17 percent while the number of beneficiaries has risen by 20 percent. In short, the agency has had to do more with less.

Now, I've thrown some numbers at you, but what does this mean outside of Washington? It means seniors who have worked their whole lives and earned these benefits are having to wait in lines around the block to get assistance. It means parents or grandparents with disabled children are waiting months, if not years, to get a decision on disability benefits. It means SSA's dedicated employees become overworked, burned out, and leave to work elsewhere.

Every member on this dais has talked about how important Social Security is to their constituents, and that we should never cut benefits. I agree. Every single American who worked their entire lives and paid into Social Security deserves nothing less than platinum-level service—full stop.

Well, a cut to SSA funding is a cut to benefits. If folks are not able to get a hold of someone at SSA to get assistance, that is in essence a 100-percent cut to their benefits. I hope we can work together to make sure that SSA has sufficient funding to bring the agency into the 21st century.

In addition to the agency's funding woes, SSA is also beholden to the laws Congress passes. Let me give you an example. I have a constituent in Albany, OR who receives SSI benefits because of a severe disability and lives in her parents' home. Although she is unable to work because of her disability, she still paid half of her SSI benefit to her parents each month as rent.

However, SSA notified her recently that she owes the government over \$9,000 in overpaid benefits spanning several years because SSA determined she received a rental subsidy from her parents, which is considered income under the Social Security Act.

My office worked with her as she tried to appeal the overpayment, but SSA denied our appeal, stating the law is clear in this case. This constituent is being punished because her parents lent a helping hand to their child.

To their credit, SSA has made notable strides to streamline and simplify SSI's rules, including those related to housing support, which would help address my constituent's situation. But SSA is still held back by outdated laws.

I, along with many members on this committee, am working to improve these bed-rock programs. Senators Brown and Cassidy have championed bipartisan legislation to modernize the SSI program to not only make it easier for beneficiaries to work, save, or marry, but it would simplify the program and reduce overpayments. I am proud to support their legislation, and I look forward to working with Senator Crapo and other colleagues on finding a path forward.

I'll close with this: SSA faces an inflection point. It can either continue relying on the policies of yesterday or come into the light and renew itself as the agency it once was. I believe Governor O'Malley is the one who can bring this agency back to its former glory and set it on a path to success.

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## COMMUNICATIONS

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### ALLIANCE FOR RETIRED AMERICANS

815 16th Street, NW, 4th Floor  
Washington, DC 20006  
(202) 637-5399  
[www.retiredamericans.org](http://www.retiredamericans.org)

The Alliance for Retired Americans appreciates the opportunity to submit a statement supporting the nomination of the Honorable Martin O'Malley to be the Commissioner of Social Security. We thank Committee Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo for holding this hearing.

Founded in 2001, the Alliance is a grassroots advocacy organization with more than 4.4 million members nationwide. The Alliance and its 39 state chapters work to advance public policy that strengthens the health and retirement security of older Americans.

For decades, Social Security has delivered guaranteed benefits on time and without interruption to millions of Americans. Americans work hard to earn their Social Security benefits, and contribute to the system with every paycheck. These benefits are essential to all who rely on them, including seniors, people with disabilities and families of deceased workers.

Today nearly 66 million Americans—one out of every five households—relies on Social Security's lifetime, guaranteed benefits. And to continue to provide retirement security for current and future generations, it is necessary to strengthen and expand Social Security to augment the program's solvency and increase benefits. Over the years, polls have consistently shown that Americans strongly support Social Security across party and demographic lines.

The Alliance believes that former Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley as Commissioner of the Social Security Administration (SSA) would be tremendously beneficial to the agency, and his leadership could assist SSA employees in their important jobs, ensure the agency is fully staffed to meet the public's needs and that SSA has the best tools and technology available to serve the American people. As Maryland's governor, Martin O'Malley distinguished himself by adopting an innovative, transparent management style, setting specific goals for problems like crime and cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay, making those goals and progress toward them transparent so citizens could see whether things were improving.

Certainly, no federal agency reaches as many Americans as the Social Security Administration. The agency is not only responsible for Social Security payments for retirees, survivors, and people with disabilities, but it helps American families with Medicare and SSI. With 10,000 Americans turning 65 every day, SSA has an ever increasing workload. Unfortunately, Congress has failed to adequately fund the program and Americans are waiting longer to have questions answered or their requests for disability benefits heard. As commissioner, we are confident that former Governor O'Malley will work effectively with Congress to secure the resources that the SSA needs, and use them as efficiently as possible.

Beyond a doubt, the Social Security Administration is in need of a confirmed commissioner to ensure that Americans are receiving the best service possible for their earned Social Security benefits, and we believe that former Governor O'Malley, a proven leader with ample experience running a large organization, is an ideal person to run the agency. For these reasons, the Alliance urges the members of this committee to advance his nomination as quickly as possible.

On behalf of our more than 4.4 million members, the Alliance for Retired Americans deeply appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony on this vitally important nomination hearing.

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AMERICAN FEDERATION OF STATE, COUNTY,  
AND MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO

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November 1, 2023

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Chairman  
United States Senate  
Committee on Finance  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael Crapo  
Ranking Member  
United States Senate  
Committee on Finance  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo:

On behalf of the 1.4 million members of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), I write in support of the nomination of the Honorable Martin O'Malley to be Commissioner of the Social Security Administration and to urge the committee to swiftly approve his confirmation.

For nearly 9 decades, Social Security has provided workers with the benefits they earned that allow them to retire with dignity, spousal and dependent children benefits, and disability insurance in case of a disabling long-term illness or injury before they retire. About 64 million people collected Social Security benefits in September 2023. Social Security is a trusted social insurance program and one of the most successful anti-poverty programs in our nation's history.

AFSCME supports the confirmation of former Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley to lead the Social Security Administration because he brings executive experience, deep policy expertise and an unwavering belief in retirement with dignity. We know that he will be a stable hand to protect, defend and expand this vital program that brings peace of mind every month to millions of Americans and their families. He will fight to ensure that seniors, people with disabilities and others get the benefits they have earned.

We urge the Senate Finance Committee to approve the confirmation of Martin O'Malley as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Edwin S. Jayne  
Director of Federal Government Affairs

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CITY OF NEW BEDFORD, MA

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New Bedford, MA 02740  
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**Jonathan F. Mitchell, Mayor**

November 27, 2023

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20510-6200

Re: Confirmation Hearing of Martin O'Malley, November 28, 2023

Dear Chairman Wyden:

I am pleased to submit this letter in support of President Biden's nomination of Martin O'Malley to become the next Commissioner of the Social Security Administration. For the past twelve years, I have had the honor of serving as the Mayor of New Bedford, Massachusetts, after a career as a federal prosecutor in Boston and Washington, D.C. I came to know Governor O'Malley personally when he was assigned to be my mentor as part of the Bloomberg-Harvard City Leadership Initiative, a leadership training program for mayors.

My intention in submitting this letter is not to itemize Governor O'Malley's accomplishments in elected office. There are no doubt a legion of former colleagues, constituents, and others who can offer first-hand accounts of how his leadership in Baltimore and Annapolis produced tangible, lasting benefits for the residents he served. On this score, it is important, however, to note that among America's mayors, Martin O'Malley is widely recognized as having led the revolution in municipal performance management. Beginning in the 1990s, cities of various sizes began to use data more formally to inform decision making, but under Mayor O'Malley's leadership, Baltimore made it a central feature of municipal governance. CitiStat, as it became known, represented O'Malley's affirmative answer to the question of whether a major city could deliver better services across the enterprise of municipal government by adopting the performance management practices employed by many of America's most successful businesses. The CitiStat approach to governing has since caught on across the country. Today, the cities considered to be the best managed in America invariably have in place some version of O'Malley's methods. For this reason, it is fair to say that Martin O'Malley is one of the most consequential American mayors of the last half century.

I also can personally attest that after his long run of success in elected office, Governor O'Malley remains as committed as ever to public service. During our work together, his passion for the effective administration of government was palpable. Our sessions were devoted to the development of practices that would enable New Bedford to identify in our data how progress in a discrete set of activities could leverage systemic improvement. Governor O'Malley understands that real improvement in the performance of government is indeed possible, but only through an unyielding commitment to constant improvement and the persistence necessary to achieve it. He made clear to me that he meant what he said when earlier this year he took a 62-mile Uber ride from Cambridge to New Bedford just so he could convey his feedback to me in person.

At a time when trust in government is precarious, Governor O'Malley is exactly the type of leader to be entrusted with the retirement benefits of nearly every American. He has dedicated his life, in the Jesuit tradition of his schooling, to performing good works by making government work better for people. He has management skills that are more likely to be found among successful private sector executives, and the lived experience necessary to understand how operational excellence can enhance the quality of life of those the organization is meant to serve. President Biden has nominated someone with the tools and the heart to ensure that, when his work is done, the Social Security Administration will be a sturdier institution than when he started.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jon Mitchell  
Mayor

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FEDS FOR FREEDOM  
P.O. Box 401014  
Las Vegas, NV 89140  
<https://www.fedsforfreedom.org/>

December 3, 2023

U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20510-6200

Re: Open Executive Session to consider favorably reporting the nomination of The Honorable Martin O'Malley, of Maryland, to be Commissioner of Social Security on November 28, 2023

Dear Honorable Ranking Member Mike Crapo and Republican Members of the Senate Committee on Finance Senators Cornyn, Thune, Scott, Lankford, Daines, Young, Johnson, Barrasso and Blackburn:

Today I write to you not only as a board member of Feds For Freedom, the premier non-profit organization representing the rights of federal employees and all Americans, but also as an 18-year employee of the Social Security Administration (SSA),\* and as a concerned citizen.

I began working at the SSA in 2005 at the inception of the Medicare Modernization Act in one of the agency's 1,200+ local field offices. At that time the SSA was moving its systems to electronic processing and was ahead of the curve in government IT systems. Since that time, I have been very fortunate to have had a wide range of experiences and opportunities at the SSA, working with a variety of people throughout the organization and the country. SSA employees have always been extremely proud of the work that we do to serve the American people regardless of political ideology.

That all changed when President Biden fired former Commissioner Andrew Saul and replaced him with current Commissioner Kilolo Kijakazi. Since that time, the priorities of the SSA have drastically shifted away from public service and employees have become overwhelmed by the political agendas of the current administration. Our front-line service to the American public has deteriorated as shown by our poor telephone wait times and our growing disability backlogs. SSA was once considered one of the best places to work in civil service. We are now ranked 17th in our agency category. A drastic lack of leadership in the Office of the Commissioner of SSA has demoralized staff due to shifting and unclear priorities and lack of accountability.

While I agree with you that President Biden's decision to remove Andrew Saul was a disgusting display of executive overreach, I implore you today to let your better judgment guide you toward making the best decision for the employees of the SSA and the American people by voting to confirm Martin O'Malley as the next Commissioner of SSA. Mr. O'Malley has a proven track record of success in leading large organizations, and he was very well prepared with a plan to restore SSA's reputation as the best public service agency in America. Punishing the employees of the SSA and the public we serve by maintaining the status quo only further politicizes the events of the last three years and does not provide an opportunity for true positive change.

As I mentioned in my opening, I am a board member of Feds For Freedom. We are a group of 8,000 dedicated federal employees and contractors who are working to reform the federal service to be more accountable, transparent, and representative of the values of the American people. Based on his testimony, Mr. O'Malley seeks to make positive changes at the SSA that align with our stated mission. As a non-profit organization, we are also nonpartisan and seek to work with a broad coalition of stakeholders. I urge you today to do the same and to reach across party lines to achieve the best result for the American people and the future of the Social Security Administration.

Thank you,  
Melissa Bruckner  
Board Member




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\*The opinions expressed in this letter do not represent the views of the Social Security Administration.