## SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

The Trump administration launched an aggressive and unprecedented campaign to dismantle the Social Security Administration's operational and workforce infrastructure. These actions, driven by executive-level political agendas and executed through the newly empowered Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), directly undermined SSA employees, field operations, and the core services relied upon by over 70 million Americans.

### Leadership Upheaval and Political Interference

The administration's efforts began with a swift change in leadership. On January 20, President Trump appointed Michelle King as Acting Commissioner of the SSA. Within weeks, King resigned on February 16 after reportedly resisting internal pressure to grant access to sensitive beneficiary data to DOGE officials, including Elon Musk's advisory network. Shortly thereafter, Leland Dudek—aligned with DOGE and known for his hostility toward traditional civil service practices—was installed as SSA Commissioner.

This marked the beginning of a deeper politicization of agency operations, as DOGE began exerting control over personnel policy, digital infrastructure, and strategic planning. By early spring, the Office of Civil Rights and the Office of Transformation within SSA were quietly shut down, removing two key internal watchdogs responsible for equity, innovation, and employee advocacy.

### Mass Workforce Reductions and Office Closures

In March 2025, the administration announced a plan to reduce SSA staffing. The reductions were carried out via early retirements, buyouts, and targeted layoffs, disproportionately affecting frontline staff and regional leadership.  At the same time, the administration began closing SSA field offices. These closures hit rural and underserved areas the hardest, leaving some communities without access to in-person Social Security services for the first time in decades.

### Collapse in Customer Service and System Integrity

As a result of staff reductions and office closures, service delivery suffered almost immediately. SSA employees reported burnout and role strain, with managers forced to answer phones and handle public inquiries due to understaffing. Phone wait times rose and claims processing delays increased. Meanwhile, the SSA's online portal—already stretched—experienced frequent outages, compounding access issues for retirees, people with disabilities, and survivors.  Despite public outcry, SSA leadership—under pressure from DOGE—began scrubbing performance data from its website, ceasing publication of wait times and service metrics by May 2025.

**Use of Schedule F and Erosion of Worker Protections**

Thousands of career SSA employees—particularly in policy, adjudication, and oversight roles—have been reclassified as "at-will" political appointees, effectively eliminating their civil service protections. This created an atmosphere of fear and instability among staff as the agency purged career professionals and consolidated political control over benefits adjudication and data management.

**Legislative Advocacy**

AFGE continues to fight in the courts and in Congress against the coordinated attack by the Trump Administration. AFGE continues to advocate for the foundational promise of Social Security—to provide dignity and security to all Americans in retirement, disability, and survivorship—may be irreparably compromised. AFGE continues to work with key members of Congress to demand the reinstatement of dismissed employees and the reopening of shuttered offices.

**Social Security Benefits Legislation**

AFGE supports S. 770 / H.R. 1700 the "Social Security Expansion Act," introduced by Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Representative Val Hoyle (D-OR) which, if enacted, would eliminate the earnings cap and investment income exemptions for Social Security contributions and use the additional revenue to shore up solvency and increase benefits.

AFGE supports H.R. 3517, the "Social Security Enhancement and Protection Act of 2025," introduced by Representative Gwen Moore (D-WI) to reform Title II of the Social Security Act, specifically by increasing the special minimum benefit for lifetime low earners based on their years in the workforce, aiming to strengthen benefits and improve the financial outlook of the program.

**FY 2026 Appropriations**

The FY 2026 Trump Administration budget proposed maintaining Social Security Administration (SSA) funding at a flat $12.7 billion. This flat funding, combined with rising demand for services, will worsen staffing shortages, increase backlogs, and lead to longer wait times for beneficiaries. Additionally, new in-person identity verification requirements—implemented in April 2025 for applications and benefit changes—could create significant barriers for individuals who have limited access to local offices or face challenges navigating online systems.

AFGE will continue to advocate for robust SSA funding and will oppose any program cuts, office closures, staffing reductions, or other funding decreases.