



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SSA FIELD OPERATIONS LOCALS
AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO
*Representing over 28,000 Social Security Employees working in over 1,200 field installations and 36
teleservice centers across the nation, Puerto Rico and Pacific Islands*

Address to:

Rep. John Larson

Chairman, Social Security Subcommittee of Ways and Means

Re: Recent Testimony of Beneficiaries

Chairman Larson:

I am reaching out as the President of AFGE Council 220, which represents over 26,000 Social Security Administration employees in field offices and teleservice centers nationwide. I am also the spokesperson for the AFGE/SSA General Committee, representing 45,000 SSA employees nationwide. I would like to comment on the recent testimony of beneficiaries and provide insight on the mismanagement of the Social Security Administration under acting Commissioner Andrew Saul.

In spite of Saul's lack of planning and failure to implement technology to support remote work, the SSA is now providing better service than ever. Thanks to telework, appointments are now available to schedule within 2 weeks of the request and the agency is even able to meet same-day requests in dire-need cases. Before the advent of nearly universal remote work for SSA field offices, beneficiaries were forced to wait for up to a month to schedule in-person. SSA has shortened the wait time for the 1-800 number and overall service has improved, but it's no thanks to Acting Commissioner Saul.

Since his appointment by President Trump in 2019, Saul has proven countless times that he is unable to do his job. Due to Saul's unwillingness to change from SSA's antiquated DOS system, beneficiaries who need to verify their identity to receive services are forced to mail in their official documents that are necessary for day-to-day life, such as their driver's license. This unacceptable process, which leaves people without critical documentation for weeks at a time (due to Saul's peer and Trump appointee Postmaster Louis DeJoy's efforts to slow down the mail), can be solved with a concerted effort by SSA to modernize its ID verification technology to allow people to send in a photocopy of their documents, which SSA would then verify using 3rd parties such as the DMV. This simple solution is already in use by the VA and the private sector. Saul's failure to implement technology to support SSA's beneficiaries in the 21st century



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was a problem before the implementation of remote work and will continue to harm our services once we return to an in-person setting.

Saul continues to excessively waste funds on extraneous projects like rebranding, rather than prioritize necessary training, retention of employees, and system updates that would modernize and ease processes. His mismanagement of SSA's budget has led to a lack of funds reserved for overtime pay, which prevents employees from rising to meet the heavy workloads that have arisen from the demands of the COVID-19 pandemic. Employees are unable to keep up with the overwhelming workloads with the consistently decreasing employee numbers. Though there are not enough staff for field offices to operate effectively, headquarters are needlessly being renovated.

The challenges Saul has created have been caused by his unwillingness to modernize the SSA. These problems require simple solutions that Saul has refused to implement. Modernization of the agency is paramount so that beneficiaries will no longer face issues when needing an uncomplicated task completed.

There needs to be clear oversight of the SSA budget and priorities with union leadership providing input and feedback. Acting Commissioner Saul is irresponsible and dangerous with his inability to modernize the SSA. He will continue to harm beneficiaries with his apathy. He cannot effectively do his job and needs to be replaced with someone who can.

Sincerely,

Ralph de Juliis
President of AFGE Council 220
Spokesperson of the AFGE/SSA General Committee