

## **Social Security Disability Insurance and Unemployment Benefits Double Dip Elimination Act of 2015 (H.R. 918)**

The *Social Security Disability Insurance and Unemployment Benefits Double Dip Elimination Act of 2015* (H.R. 918), introduced by Ways and Means Social Security Subcommittee Chairman Sam Johnson (R-TX), would end the ability to double dip by receiving Social Security disability benefits and unemployment benefits at the same time and preserves Social Security benefits for only those who truly cannot work.

### **Background**

- The federal-state Unemployment Insurance (UI) program assists unemployed individuals by offering weekly unemployment-benefit checks while they look for work. In order to be eligible, jobless workers must have a history of attachment to the workforce and must be able and available for work.
- Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers (TAA) provides federally funded benefits to dislocated workers who have lost their jobs because of foreign trade—primarily reemployment services and income support for workers who have exhausted their UI benefits.
- To qualify for Social Security Disability Insurance (DI) benefits, a person must be unable to engage in substantial gainful activity (having earnings, which signify the ability to work, of \$1,090 in 2015), because of a medically determinable impairment that is expected to last 12 months or result in death.
- Under current law, a person can receive UI benefits (which requires an individual be willing and able to work) while also receiving DI benefits (and therefore be unable to work).
- Beginning in 2016, the DI program will be able to pay only 81 percent of promised benefits unless Congress acts.

### **Findings of the Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report<sup>1</sup>**

- In fiscal year 2010, at least 117,000 people received DI and UI benefits at the same time, representing less than 1 percent of total beneficiaries of both programs.
- The GAO estimates the overlapping cash benefits paid to these recipients totaled over \$281 million from DI and more than \$575 million from UI.
- These simultaneous cash-benefit payments made to people on both programs are an overlapping replacement of their lost earnings, according to GAO.

### **The President's Proposal**

- In the President's budget, he proposed reducing the DI benefit in any month UI benefits are also received, in order to eliminate the concurrent benefit payment.
  - Estimated 10-year savings: \$2 billion

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- Affects only those applying for benefits on or after January 1, 2016.
- Affects only people applying for DI benefits and receiving unemployment benefits (UI or TAA). They are deemed to be engaging in substantial gainful activity and are therefore ineligible for DI benefits.
- Once receiving DI benefits, any month in which unemployment benefits are received will be considered part of the Trial Work Period.<sup>2</sup>
- 10-year savings according to Social Security actuary: \$5.7 billion

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<sup>1</sup> [Overlapping Disability and Unemployment Benefits Should Be Evaluated for Potential Savings, Government Accountability Office, July 31, 2012.](#)

<sup>2</sup> The Trial Work Period allows DI beneficiaries to test their ability to work for 9 months without fear of losing benefits.