

Representative Sam Johnson Testimony

“Protecting the Safety Net from Waste, Fraud and Abuse”

June 3, 2015

Chairman Boustany, Ranking Member Doggett, thank you for holding this hearing today.

As the Chairman of the Social Security Subcommittee, I’ve looked at the Disability Insurance program from nearly every angle and have seen how vulnerable the program is to waste, fraud, and abuse. And make no mistake: waste, fraud, and abuse in the disability program is a problem – a problem for the American taxpayer and a problem for deserving beneficiaries.

Social Security works hand-in-hand with a number of other programs that are run by the Federal government. Because of this, many of the commonsense reforms I have introduced also affect the programs under this Subcommittee’s jurisdiction. I have enjoyed working with several of you on legislation to improve these programs, and I would like to discuss a number of them today.

First, I want to discuss the **Social Security Disability Insurance and Unemployment Benefits Double Dip Elimination Act of 2015**.

In a 2012 report, the Government Accountability Office found that, under current law, thousands of people have been able to receive benefits from both the Unemployment Insurance program and the Disability Insurance program at the same time. Both provide cash to workers, but for different reasons.

Unemployment Insurance benefits are there for those workers who have lost their jobs but are still *able* to work.

However, when a worker is *unable* to work due to a severe medical condition that is expected to last at least a year or result in death, Disability Insurance benefits are there.

Now even though disability benefits are for those who can't work and unemployment benefits are for those who can work, under current law someone can receive both benefits at the same time!

That just doesn't make sense!

That's why I introduced common-sense legislation to help preserve Social Security disability benefits only for those who truly cannot work.

The President has included a similar proposal in his budget for the last two years. And while there are very few things on which I agree with this President, on this we are on the same page. It's just not right for someone to double-dip.

Now, we do have slightly different approaches. And I'm concerned that President Obama's approach could lead to additional overpayments by the Social Security Administration, which already happens far too often due to Social Security's mistakes.

I also recently teamed up with a member of this Subcommittee, Congresswoman Kristi Noem, to introduce **the Control Unlawful Fugitive Felons Act of 2015**.

This legislation is just commonsense – that's why similar bills passed Congress in 1996 and 2004. Our bill would prevent felons fleeing a warrant, as well as probation and parole violators, from collecting Supplemental Security Income and Disability Insurance benefits.

The legislation is simple: if you're fleeing prosecution, we aren't going to give you the same benefits as law-abiding citizens.

Our bill has built-in protections so that only serious criminals can be denied benefits. And Social Security has the authority to determine whether good cause exists for benefits to be restored when the matter is questionable.

Americans won't stand for criminals getting benefits, especially when Social Security will soon lack the money to pay full benefits to law-abiding citizens. This bill has the support of Social Security's Inspector General. I would also like to thank the law enforcement community in my district for supporting this bill. Mr.

Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to submit several statements of support from police chiefs as well as the county sheriff from back home.

Finally, I have worked closely with the Chairman of this Subcommittee, Chairman Boustany, on legislation that would help to deter, punish, and prevent fraud in the Social Security system.

The Disability FRAUD Prevention Act of 2015 would impose additional penalties and charges for those who are defrauding the retirement, disability, or Supplemental Security Income programs.

We have seen scandals in West Virginia, New York, and Puerto Rico where fraudsters stole millions of dollars from the American taxpayer!

The legislation Chairman Boustany and I have introduced is simple: If you commit fraud against Social Security, we will punish you and you will repay the money you took until the American taxpayer is made whole. And, we will require Social Security to review representatives that are outliers.

All told, these bills combined would save almost \$10 billion. Of that money, \$6.4 billion would go to the Social Security Trust Funds. With a Disability Insurance Trust Fund running out of money in a little over a year, this is just common sense. The American taxpayers expect nothing less.

Thank you for inviting me today to discuss with you these important and common-sense measures.