



Social Security Advisory Board

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Board Meeting Minutes September 15, 2017

Location:	400 Virginia Avenue SW, Suite 625 Washington, D.C. 20024
Time:	9:15 am – 4:00 pm
SSAB Members:	Kim Hildred, Chair Henry Aaron Lanhee Chen Bernadette Franks-Ongoy Jagadeesh Gokhale
SSAB Staff:	Claire Green, Staff Director Anita Grant, Senior Advisor Jackie Chapin, Senior Advisor Jenn Rigger, Senior Advisor David Warner, Senior Advisor Joel Feinleib, Staff Economist Caitlyn Tateishi, Management Analyst Bethel Dejene, Management Analyst Conway Reinders, Policy Analyst
NCSSMA Participants:	Rachel Emmons, Washington representative Chris Detzler, President Peggy Murphy, Vice President
SSA OIG Participants:	Kim Byrd, Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Audit Rona Lawson, Acting Assistant Inspector General for Audit
SSA Participants:	Nancy Berryhill, Acting Commissioner Stephanie Hall, Deputy Chief of Staff Rajive Mathur, Deputy Commissioner, Systems Terrie Gruber, Deputy Commissioner, Office of Hearings Operations

Pat Jonas, Deputy Commissioner, Office of Analytics, Review, and Oversight
Amy Thompson, Acting Assistant Deputy Commissioner, Office of Analytics, Review, and Oversight
John Phillips, Associate Commissioner, Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics
Lester Diamond, Deputy Associate Commissioner, Office of Systems Architecture
Sean Brune, Chief Program Officer, IT Modernization

CNSTAT Participant:

Constance Citro, Senior Scholar, Committee on National Statistics, National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine

The board met with representatives of the National Council of Social Security Management Associations (NCSSMA) to discuss the Social Security Administration's (SSA's) rollout of a telework pilot in select field offices. After a presidential memorandum directing agencies to implement telework pilots, SSA moved quickly to implement the policy in select field offices, Processing Service Centers (PSCs), and Teleservice Centers (TSCs). Chris Detzler, President of NCSSMA, explained that under SSA rules for the pilot, management in selected field offices must offer telework to all eligible staff, and then allow staff to take the option if they so choose. For some offices where most claims are by telephone, telework works well. However, Detzler explained, it makes less sense for offices where there is more in-person traffic. NCSSMA requested that managers have full discretion over which employees can telework and when. NCSSMA representatives also urged SSA to evaluate the impact of the telework policy on the public. The board asked for formal written comment from NCSSMA on how the organization would recommend designing an appropriate telework policy and how they would propose to measure the effects of telework.

The board met with representatives of SSA's Office of Inspector General (OIG) to discuss OIG's audit on the implementation of the telework pilot in SSA field offices. OIG received a request from Chairman Johnson to examine SSA's telework policy. OIG examined the effect of telework on three SSA components: field offices, TSCs, and the Office of Disability Adjudication and Review (ODAR). OIG examined the impact of telework on customer service and in general, the evidence was statistically inconclusive as to the effect of telework on metrics such as field office wait times.

The board met with Constance F. Citro, Senior Scholar and former Director at the Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT), a part of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. Citro described the findings of CNSTAT's publication, "Principles and Practices for a Federal Statistical Agency: Sixth Edition," published in 2017. The book presents fundamental principles for statistical agencies and offers best practices for implementing those principles. The first version of the report, published in 1992, offered three key principles for statistical agencies: relevance, credibility among users, and trust among data providers. The board discussed the possibility of formalized external evaluations of statistical agencies. Citro pointed to an example of such a practice in the British government, which has an agency that can "un-officialize" certain

government data that it feels are not up to standard. The board also discussed the possibility of developing standards for statistical agencies to hold statistical agencies more accountable.

The board met with John Phillips, Associate Commissioner of the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics (ORES) to discuss the work of his office as a statistical agency within the federal government. Phillips manages two relevant offices within ORES: the Office of Statistical Analysis and Support (OSAS) and the Office of Data Development (ODD). Phillips provided a background of SSA as a statistical agency. SSA was recently elevated to a “primary” statistical agency. ORES produces data for statistical purposes only; it may not use data for any operational purposes including flagging suspicious activity. The authority for this limitation is found in CNSTAT’s principles, even though the principles do not have the force of law. Phillips explained that every time ORES receives a research question that is not in the data extracts, his office has to develop the data from scratch from SSA administrative data files, which are mostly in cumbersome Cobalt computer code. The board asked about the legal constraints to SSA’s conducting research with data from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Phillips explained that, under current law, all data received by SSA from IRS must be used for operational purposes and may not be used for research purposes. This rule limits SSA’s uses of IRS data.

I certify that the minutes written for the September 15, 2017 meeting of the Social Security Advisory Board are correct.



Kim Hildred