



# Social Security Advisory Board

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Kim Hildred, Chair  
Henry J. Aaron  
Bob Joondeph  
Jagadeesh Gokhale  
Nancy J. Altman

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Claire Green, Staff Director

## **Board Meeting Minutes - March 27-28, 2019**

**Location:** 400 Virginia Avenue, SW  
Suite 625  
Washington, DC 20024

**Time:** 9:00 am – 4:30pm EST

**SSAB Members:** Kim Hildred, Chair  
Henry Aaron  
Nancy Altman  
Jagadeesh Gokhale  
Bob Joondeph

**SSAB Staff:** Claire Green, Staff Director  
Diane Brandt, Research Director  
Anita Grant, Senior Advisor  
Jenn Rigger, Senior Advisor  
Joel Feinleib, Senior Advisor  
Pamela Crawford, Senior Advisor  
Bethel Dejene, Management Analyst  
Conway Reinders, Lead Policy Analyst  
Emma Tatem, Policy Analyst  
James Owens, Policy Analyst

**Presenters:** **Manasi Deshpande, PhD**, Assistant Professor of Economics, University of Chicago  
**Phoebe Ball**, Legislative Affairs Specialist, National Council on Disability  
**Stacy Cloyd**, Deputy Director of Government Affairs, National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives

**Andrew Sperling**, Director of Legislative and Policy Advocacy, National Alliance of Mental Illness

**Peggy Murphy**, President, National Council of Social Security Management Associations

**Liz McLaren**, President, National Council of Disability Determination Director

**Michelle King**, Deputy Commissioner Budget, Finance, and Management Social Security Administration

**Chad Poist** – Acting Deputy Associate Commissioner, Office of Budget, Social Security Administration

**Paul Hallinger** – Senior Technical Advisor, Office of Budget, Social Security Administration

On March 27<sup>th</sup>, per the Board’s congressional request to look at field office closures, Professor Manasi Deshpande was asked to present her research on the effects disability application rates when field offices are closed. Dr. Deshpande’s paper, “Who is Screened Out?” found that field office closings disproportionately discouraged potential applicants for disability benefits who would have been allowed onto the program. Results showed disability applications fell by 10 percent and receipts by 16 percent in zip codes surrounding closed offices for at least two years after closing, with the biggest effects on applicants with moderately severe conditions, low education and pre-application earnings levels.

In the afternoon, the Board held a roundtable discussion on the reconsideration level of the disability process. The purpose of the roundtable discussion was to seek input from stakeholders. This roundtable had been requested in October 2018 via a letter from the Subcommittee on Social Security. Prior to the reconsideration roundtable, SSAB staff reviewed the disability evaluation process and the roles of the field offices and state disability determination services.

Stakeholders shared their ideas to improve the disability determination process during the roundtable.

**Common themes included:**

- Obtaining as much relevant medical evidence as possible to develop cases;
- Modernizing communication (including using text and email reminders to claimants and representatives);
- Reforming the disability determination process to better serve claimants with mental health disabilities, integrate and make more efficient the systems used to track and process a disability claim and collect the most appropriate expert evaluations; and
- Better educating claimants and representatives on the reconsideration process and program requirements.

The meeting on March 28, 2019 was in executive session.

I certify that the public minutes written for the March 27, 2019 meeting of the Social Security Advisory Board are correct.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kim Hildred". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Kim Hildred