

Social Security Advisory Board Annual Report

2007



September 2008

Social Security Advisory Board

An independent, bipartisan Board created by the Congress and appointed by the President and the Congress to advise the President, the Congress, and the Commissioner of Social Security on matters related to the Social Security and Supplemental Security Income programs

Message from the Board

Welcome to the 2007 Annual Report of the Social Security Advisory Board. This year marks the tenth anniversary of our Annual Report.

Since the Board began meeting in the spring of 1996, we have focused on the mandates set out in our enacting legislation to analyze and make recommendations regarding the Nation's retirement and disability programs. Our work has encompassed a number of important issues including the Social Security disability programs, funding for the Social Security Administration (SSA), the role SSA plays in the public's understanding of financial planning for retirement, information technology and electronic service delivery to the public, the administration of the Supplemental Security Income program, and other challenges facing Social Security. Our reports and recommendations, which have been issued by consensus, are widely distributed to Members of Congress, the Administration, and the public.

The year 2007 was one of transition for the Board. In September 2006, the terms of two members (including the Chair) expired, but we gained four new members—more than half of our membership—later that year. In July 2007, our long-term staff director retired. We were fortunate, however, to find a new director who was more than qualified to support us through this transition and keep us focused on the challenges that lay ahead. As a result of these changes, a significant part of 2007 was spent meeting with agency officials and other experts to give our new members the opportunity to hear first-hand about the challenges SSA is facing.

The year was also a year of planning and developing long-term initiatives, with our new members bringing many fresh ideas to the table. Early in 2007, we adopted an ambitious multi-year work plan to study issues such as how to keep older workers in the workforce, SSA's role in helping individuals understand retirement security, Social Security program complexities and disincentives regarding marriage and work, and the state of SSA technology planning and implementation.

The year 2007 was a very interesting year for the Board, one of rebuilding and refocusing. It was also a year of intense learning. This, our tenth anniversary Annual Report, describes the issues that we are studying, the work that we have completed, and the work that we have underway.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Look at the Issues: The Board’s Review of Current Social Security Administrative and Program Concerns	1
SSA’s Budget: The Importance of Closing the Funding Gap	1
Strategic Planning and the State of Information Technology at the Social Security Administration	2
Technical Panel Review Provides New Perspectives	4
Rethinking Disability Service Improvements	6
The Continuing Dialogue on Administrative Law Judge Issues.....	7
SSA’s Role in Retirement Education and Financial Literacy	8
Policy Reviews	9
Are the Consequences of Certain Policies Acceptable?	9
How Do We Keep Older Workers in the Workforce?	9
Board Research: Visits to the Frontline	10
The Urban Experience: Diverse Service Delivery Options in Chicago	10
Service Delivery in Rural America: A Visit to Montana and the Denver Region	11
Appendix	13
2007 Social Security Advisory Board Members... ..	15
Legislation that Established the Social Security Advisory Board... ..	19
The Board’s Mandate.....	19
2007 Board Operations and Communications.....	21
Compendium of Board Reports and Publications	23
Individuals with Whom the Board Met in 2007	25
Board Staff	29

A Look at the Issues: The Board's Review of Current Social Security Administrative and Program Concerns

SSA's Budget: The Importance of Closing the Funding Gap

Over the last few years the Social Security Advisory Board has grown increasingly concerned about SSA's ability to maintain sufficient administrative capacity to deliver the level and quality of service to which the public is entitled. These concerns have been driven, in large part, by the heavy burden that our aging society has placed on SSA's ability to process its workloads at the same time that its resources have been shrinking in real terms. In fact, the strains on the agency were already evidenced at the beginning of 2007 by the huge backlogs in SSA's disability hearings and post-entitlement workloads. The Board worked throughout 2007 to support SSA's efforts to obtain adequate funding.

Since the mid-1970s, SSA has consistently been funded by the Congress at levels below amounts requested in the President's Budget, and at considerably lower levels than the amounts originally requested by SSA's Commissioners. As the Board has traveled to the different sections of the country meeting with employees, visiting Social Security field offices, and talking with the public it has become abundantly clear that despite gains in productivity and expansion of electronic tools and Internet services, SSA has simply not been able to handle all of its workloads. Telephone calls to SSA field offices go unanswered and callers to the national 800 number are likely to experience busy signals over half the time. The number of undecided hearings cases has more than doubled since 2000 and individuals wait over 500 days for a hearing before an administrative law judge. Stewardship responsibilities have slipped because resources have been shifted away from continuing disability reviews so the agency can concentrate on initial claims.

In early 2007, we met with SSA's Deputy Commissioner for Budget, Finance and Management (DCBFM) for a briefing on the agency's budget outlook for fiscal year 2008 and beyond. The President's fiscal year 2008 budget request set SSA's budget at almost \$9.6 billion and included an increase of about \$400 million over the estimated budget for FY 2007. While this budget represented a 4.6 percent increase over current spending, we remained concerned that even this increased level of funding would be insufficient for the agency to process growing workloads.

The Board recognizes that, as a nation, we are faced with shrinking resources and growing deficits. Congress is challenged each year to find new ways to fund government agencies, including the Social Security Administration. But SSA's funding shortfalls have gotten to a critical stage.

Over the past several years we have looked extensively at the budget process and how it affects SSA, and we believe that some actions can be taken to improve SSA's funding situation. In one of our earliest reports, we recommended that SSA's administrative budget be explicitly excluded from the cap on discretionary spending and we continue to endorse this solution. Since SSA's administrative funds come out of the same trust funds that pay for Social Security benefits, we believe that it is entirely appropriate that the limitation on administrative expenses be set at a level that fits the needs of the taxpayers and the beneficiaries, rather than at an arbitrary level so it can fit under an overall government spending cap. Budgeting outside of the cap need not lead to unrestrained spending if there is appropriate Congressional oversight.

We also believe that the creation of a special funding mechanism such as an incentive-based stewardship approach is appropriate—it would allow SSA to use program savings to pay for program administration. SSA’s Office of the Chief Actuary has estimated that the savings to the trust funds generated by conducting continuing disability reviews far outweigh the administrative cost by a ratio of \$10 for every \$1 spent.

During 2007 we held a series of meetings with staff from the Senate Finance Committee, the Social Security Subcommittee of the House Committee on Ways and Means, the Senate Appropriations Committee, and with the Director of the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) to discuss these issues. We learned that the budget scoring rules used by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) preclude using direct spending reductions for administrative or program management expenses. While we understand that there is this distinction between administrative and program spending it is, in the case of the Social Security Administration, an artificial distinction.

We found that in 2007 SSA became much more active in telling Congress of the challenges that it faces. We applaud the agency for its education and outreach efforts—educating lawmakers on the complexities of the Social Security programs is a critical first step in helping them understand the true cost of the service that they and their constituents expect.

Throughout the fiscal year, we made efforts to secure an increase in funding for SSA. In letters dated May 21, 2007, we urged the Chairmen and Ranking Members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to provide sufficient administrative funding that would allow the agency to carry out its public service and stewardship responsibilities. In addition, several Board members held informal conversations with key legislators to support SSA’s case for an increased budget.

Strategic Planning and the State of Information Technology at the Social Security Administration

In January 2007 as part of an orientation for the new Board members, we visited SSA’s headquarters in Baltimore to meet with many of SSA’s executives, including the Deputy Commissioner for Systems. SSA has implemented a monumental electronic disability case processing system and much of our discussion focused on the progress of this new system. In addition, we had the opportunity to explore how the agency identifies emerging technologies, funds current and new IT projects, and how the business process has changed to incorporate new electronic tools. From these meetings, three issues stood out:

- SSA’s online retirement and disability claims applications are used very little by the public.
- SSA has the lowest IT budget among all federal agencies of its size ranking 24 out of 27 federal agencies in terms of the amount of IT money spent per employee.
- While the agency publishes a variety of strategic plans, there is no single overarching document that articulates its vision for electronic service delivery in the 21st century.

As a result of that meeting and the growing concerns about resources needed to meet public expectations, the Board members initiated an in-depth study of SSA’s technological readiness to address coming challenges. Moreover, we decided to frame the study within the context of the agency’s ability to plan strategically for the future.

The Board's IT Project Team, appointed by the full Board to carry out this review, spent most of 2007 researching and benchmarking SSA's practices. Discussions with SSA executives focused on the effectiveness of their process to govern IT projects and whether IT projects fit within agency strategic objectives. In July and again in October, the Board had the opportunity during visits to the Chicago and Denver regions to speak with front line SSA employees about the effectiveness of the agency's systems and what improvements they would like to see implemented. We heard concerns relative to:

- the role the regional automation staffs play in the planning and development of agency-wide initiatives;
- SSA systems becoming rapidly obsolete and too many of the agency's resources needing to be allocated to keeping things from breaking down rather than developing new systems that work. As a result, the regions develop many of their own systems in order to process work more productively;
- a bifurcated development process that leads to a piecemeal systems structure.

Additional research was conducted by looking outside the agency for individuals who could offer an independent perspective of SSA systems and IT development. These discussions revolved around common themes including the need to establish a consistent set of priorities that are in alignment with a consistent long range vision, the importance of clearly linking IT decisions to a strategic plan, and assuring that information technology initiatives are robust enough and flexible enough to support evolving business processes. A very clear message was heard that the agency needs to move more aggressively toward modernizing the agency's work processes.

In September 2007, the National Research Council (NRC) published its assessment of SSA's electronic service provision and the Board met with representatives from the Committee in December. This meeting provided us with an independent analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of SSA's current system and has been a valuable resource for our own exploration of these issues.

Our research for this project included several discussions with systems experts and business managers from outside organizations. During the year, several Board members met with senior executives from the Department of Veteran's Affairs, the Internal Revenue Service and Aetna Insurance Company. We selected these organizations for our benchmarking because each one had recently undergone a fundamental change in strategic planning for business process redesign and concomitant systems modernization.

We plan to issue a final report in the fall of 2008.

Technical Panel Review Provides New Perspectives

In our mandate we are tasked with making “recommendations to the President and to the Congress with respect to policies that will ensure the solvency of the OASDI programs, both in the short term and in the long term.” Prior to the creation of the Advisory Board, Technical Panels had been appointed by the quadrennial Advisory Councils on Social Security to review the assumptions and methods used by the Board of Trustees of the OASDI trust funds and SSA’s Office of the Chief Actuary (OACT) in making long-range projections of the financial status of the Social Security program. Beginning in 1999 the Advisory Board assumed the responsibility for the appointment of these panels and established technical panels in 1999 and 2003.

Following past practice, the Board appointed its third Technical Panel in September 2006, which began meeting in early 2007. The 2007 Panel was charged by the Board with reviewing the key demographic and economic assumptions, the trends related to the changing structure and cost of employee benefits, and the projection methodology used by the Trustees and OACT in evaluating the long-range status of the program. The 2007 Panel was also charged with reviewing and assessing the recommendations of the 1999 and the 2003 Technical Panels.

The ten-member Panel was comprised of distinguished economists, demographers, and actuaries under the chairmanship of Dan L. Crippen. Panel members included:

- Dan L. Crippen, Chair, Director, Congressional Budget Office, 1999-2003
- Mary C. Daly, Vice President, Applied Microeconomic Research and Regional Development, Director, Center for the Study of Innovation and Productivity, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco
- Robert J. Gordon, Stanley G. Harris Professor of the Social Sciences, Department of Economics, Northwestern University
- William Hsiao, K.T. Li Professor of Economics, Department of Health Policy and Management, Program in Health Care Financing, Harvard School of Public Health
- Steve Lieberman, Partner, The Moran Company
- Deborah J. Lucas, Donald C. Clark/Household International Distinguished Professor of Finance, Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University
- Jeffrey S. Passel, Senior Research Associate, Pew Hispanic Center
- Beth Soldo, Director, Population Aging Research Center; Distinguished Senior Scholar, Sociology Research Associate, Population Studies Center, University of Pennsylvania
- P.J. Eric Stallard, Research Professor and Associate Director for Management and Planning, Center for Demographic Studies, Duke University
- Shripad Tuljapurkar, Morrison Professor of Population Studies and Professor of Biological Sciences Stanford University

The Panel's first meeting in 2007 was with John L. Palmer of Syracuse University and Thomas R. Saving of Texas A&M University, the Public Trustees from the Board of Trustees of the Social Security Trust Funds. This was the first time a Technical Panel had ever met with the Public Trustees and this session set the stage for what was to become a year long dialogue within the larger actuarial community on the projections of Social Security's financial status. Over the next several months, the Panel met with experts to discuss trends in disability, labor force participation, and retirement behavior. They researched a number of the economic assumptions that are included in the Trustees Report, including assumptions regarding interest rates, inflation, productivity, net wage growth and methods of discounting.

The Advisory Board provided funding, as well as logistical and staff support, for the Technical Panel. The Social Security Office of the Chief Actuary provided technical assistance to the Panel and participated in many of its meetings. Staff representatives of all of the Trustees of the Social Security trust funds were also present at several meetings. In addition, the Board met with the Public Trustees John Palmer and Thomas Saving to gain their perspectives on the role and importance of Technical Panels and solicit recommendations on how the process might be improved.

The Panel made a number of significant recommendations for changes in the assumptions and methods used by the Trustees and the actuaries in making program projections. The Panel recommended a faster development of microsimulation modeling tools and a renewed emphasis on making projection methods more transparent. In addition, some recommended assumptions would improve the financial status of the program such as immigration and real wage, while others would have the opposite effect such as more rapid decline in the mortality rate.

At the conclusion of the formal meetings of this Technical Panel the Board received a detailed briefing on the Panel's recommendations. Later in the same day a public meeting was held providing the Panel with its first opportunity to brief invited guests, including Thomas Savings, Public Trustee, members of the Trustees' working group (the principal staff members from several agencies who provide the Board of Trustees with background and advice), senior staff from SSA's Office of the Actuary and the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics, as well as other members of the public. The day marked a significant advance in the depth and quality of communication among the key participants in the actuarial community concerning the crucial issues of projecting long-range finances.

In early September the Panel met again with the Trustees' working group, the Public Trustees and the working group chair, and the Treasury Assistant Secretary for Economic Policy for a more intensive discussion of the Panel's recommendations. These discussions were intended to help inform the Trustees as they formulated their 2008 report; an early draft of the panel's report was also provided to the Trustees working group.

While the Social Security Advisory Board does not take a position on any of the recommendations of the Panel, we believe that it is important for periodic reviews of this type to be conducted. They provide a valuable source of outside expertise to the Trustees and actuaries as they make their projections. Perhaps more importantly they assure the public that the assumptions and methods used, and therefore the projections made, are truly professional and unbiased.

During the period when the Technical Panel was working, the Board met to discuss the 2007 Annual Reports of the OASDI and the Medicare Trust Funds with Stephen Goss, Social Security's Chief Actuary and Richard Foster, Chief Actuary for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Rethinking Disability Service Improvements

By the beginning of 2007, after only five months experience in the Boston Region, the Disability Service Improvements (DSI) initiative was already under stress and was having major difficulties. In January 2007, when the Board visited SSA's headquarters in Baltimore, SSA executives reported that several significant enablers for the project were still not in place and that the Disability Determination Services (DDSs) were experiencing serious problems with the electronic tools designed to implement the new process. In February, one of first actions taken by new SSA Commissioner Michael Astrue was to begin an assessment of DSI to determine if it could be rolled out as originally planned. In a series of meetings with the Board, the Commissioner kept us apprised of the status of DSI. The agency was conducting a careful analysis of the costs and benefits of this new process in an effort to preserve the process improvements and to make the difficult decisions relative to aspects that were not performing as anticipated.

SSA has undertaken a variety of pilots and tests of redesigned disability process, none of which were ever fully implemented. As we stated in our October 2005 comments on the Notice of Proposed Rule making on "Administrative Review Process for Adjudicating Initial Disability Claims," the Board has carefully studied the disability adjudication process for a number of years and has published several reports recommending ways in which to improve the consistency and timeliness of the process. We expressed basic agreement with the proposal but cautioned that the implementation needed to be properly resourced and be sufficiently flexible to accommodate any needed refinements or change. As data became available and as we held informal discussions with members of the SSA and DDS disability community, we became increasingly concerned about whether the DSI initiative could deliver the improvements as promised.

In April, the Board members and staff participated in a series of meetings to collect information on the current status of the DSI roll-out and to identify problems encountered by SSA and DDS employees. In Falls Church, Virginia, the staff director and other staff members met with the new Federal Reviewing Officials (FedRO) to hear first hand their assessment of the new FedRO process. They described the complexities of the FedRO workflow and how it severely hindered their interactions with the Office of Medical and Vocational Expertise (OMVE). They warned of backlogs that were already building due to the delays in receiving cases back from the OMVE with needed medical evidence and analysis. (In fact by the end of the year, the FedRO caseload would grow to almost 18,000 cases with two-third pending over 90 days.)

Also in April, the Board Chairman and several staff members went to Hartford, Connecticut to meet with the staff of the Connecticut DDS and the Hartford Hearing Office. The DDS described the systems-related problems that were adversely affecting their ability to process cases. In particular, the disability adjudicators were frustrated by the difficulties involved in using the new Electronic Claims Analysis Tool (eCAT). While they genuinely supported the principle behind the development of eCAT, their overall analysis was that the tool had been rushed into production without sufficient testing, which had resulted in chaos for the end-users. The one part of the DSI process that seemed to be working well was the Quick Disability Determinations (QDD); the DDS reported on the positive impact QDD cases were having in the community. At the Hartford hearing office the management staff discussed the impending DSI workload; but after six months of implementation they had received only 50 cases and no DSI hearings had been held to date.

During Board meetings in the spring of 2007 members were briefed on the situation the agency was finding itself in with regard to the implementation of DSI, as well as the developing crisis involving the disability backlogs. These conversations centered on the resources and funding that would be needed to stabilize the current roll-out in the Boston Region. As the agency gained more experience with this new process, they found that the costs were higher than had been anticipated and without all of the electronic enablers in place, the hoped for efficiencies were not occurring. Based on feedback received by the Board, we agreed with the agency's decision to pull back on the majority of process changes while accelerating the implementation of the QDD process.

To make the changes needed to suspend the DSI initiative, new regulations were required to lay out the steps and timeframes involved in reverting back to the pre-DSI process for cases filed in the Boston Region. However, SSA encountered strong support for DSI outside of the agency and concerns were heard that the project was being abandoned too quickly. We believe that aspects of the Disability Service Improvement initiative have potential to improve service to people with disabilities; however, it was taking too great a toll on the agency's limited resources because it was not ready for implementation. In view of this, the Board Chairman wrote to the Office of Management and Budget urging that the proposed regulations to suspend DSI be issued as soon as possible.

The regulation package was published as three separate regulations. The first two regulations received little comment and the agency made plans to implement the changes. The final regulation was published at the end of October and immediately met with strong opposition from the advocate community and members of Congress. As the Board members considered the arguments surrounding this regulation, we agreed that further discussions with the agency would be needed in the coming year.

The Continuing Dialogue on Administrative Law Judge Issues

Almost from its inception, the Advisory Board has focused much of its energy on strategies to improve the disability program. Over the years, the Board has written reports, testified at Congressional hearings, spoken to any number of groups and advised the agency on issues involving administrative hearings. Our September 2006 report on "Improving the Social Security Administration's Hearing Process" addressed a number of issues such as the selection of administrative law judges (ALJs), the management structure in hearing offices, and increased ALJ accountability and training. As backlogs continued to rise in the Office of Disability Adjudication and Review, we became increasingly concerned that the hearings process was failing.

In 2007 we continued to observe that the agency was struggling to meet its target for dispositions by administrative law judges and we began to look more closely at the recruitment process for ALJs. In April, we published an issue brief, "Recruiting SSA Administrative Law Judges: Need for Review of OPM Role and Performance." The issue brief described the role of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in hiring ALJs and provided background on the proceedings that had led the Merit Systems Protection Board to stop the hiring process from 1999 to 2003. The brief explained that SSA's ability to hire ALJs since that time had been severely limited by OPM's handling of ALJ recruitment and it also cited OPM's failure to devote the necessary resources to developing a current register of qualified applicants. Based on OPM's performance, the Board raised questions about whether the current process for hiring ALJs serves the best interests of the Social Security program. The issue brief went on to recommend that Congress carefully review the current hiring process, making whatever

changes are needed to assure that SSA is able to hire ALJs who have the independence to make unbiased judgments as well as those who have the best qualifications to carry out the important work of conducting hearings both accurately and efficiently.

Just after the publication of this brief, Chairman Sylvester J. Schieber was invited to address the annual meeting of the Association of Administrative Law Judges. Noting that the Board had issued the first of several reports on the disability program in 1998, he highlighted several serious concerns cited in those early reports, including the lack of consistency in decision making, unexplained changes in application and allowance rates, the complexity, slowness and cost of the application and appeal process, and the lack of confidence in the system. Unfortunately, he concluded, things had not greatly improved in those respects.

In a very frank exchange, the Chairman told the assembled group of ALJs that the part of the program that was in the worst shape was the hearing process, where the number of pending claims had more than doubled since 1998. While acknowledging that part of the problem was due to the agency's inability to increase the number of ALJs and hire support staff, he stated quite candidly that some ALJs were producing at unacceptably low levels. He also said that the agency needed to look more closely at high producing judges (to ensure that they were not sacrificing quality for speed), as well as judges who seem overly prone to allow or deny claims. For those ALJs who were carrying out their duties in a responsible manner, Dr. Schieber encouraged them to work with the management of the agency to develop reasonable standards and procedures that would fully protect decisional independence while identifying and seeking appropriate correction of situations where there was a failure to meet those standards.

As the year progressed, the Board continued discussions with the agency leadership concerning the ALJs' role in reducing the disability backlogs. In December, the Chief Administrative Law Judge and the Deputy Chief Administrative Law Judge met with the Board to discuss their plans for achieving improved productivity in the coming year.

SSA's Role in Retirement Education and Financial Literacy

Over the years, we have regularly reviewed the role SSA should play in helping the public understand issues surrounding retirement and financial literacy. In 2007, the Board once again decided to pursue such a review, but with a focus on the Social Security Statement and other routine communications the agency has with the public about claiming benefits. While there are certainly broader social policy implications regarding financial literacy, the extent of this review is limited to what the agency could do within the scope of its core mission.

Much of the year was devoted to identifying what information the agency provides about benefits and benefit claiming and how well that message is understood by the public. In particular, we wanted to explore the role that the Social Security Statement plays in helping individuals, no matter what age, plan for their retirement. During visits to the Chicago and Denver Regions, we talked with regional office and field office employees about how claiming options were explained to individuals. It was particularly instructive to sit in on interviews in the field office and observe public reaction relative to the discussion surrounding the claiming options.

Policy Reviews

Are the Consequences of Certain Policies Acceptable?

The interests and perspectives that new Board members have brought to our deliberations has helped shape this year's agenda. One area that we collectively decided to explore is the unforeseen consequences of certain SSA policies, particularly policies involving the Disability Insurance (DI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs. The legislation establishing the DI program was passed in July 1956; the first SSI payments were issued almost 20 years later in 1974. The questions raised in Board discussions centered on whether these programs were working as Congress intended them to and whether they were keeping pace in the 21st century, i.e., providing an appropriate benefit structure for the American people.

Several aspects of the DI and SSI programs were identified for review. Research and discussions have been underway on a number of issues that we believe should be reviewed by the Congress in the light of unforeseen consequences or changes in conditions since these programs were initiated.

The issues that the Board has been studying include:

- Marriage penalties
- Substantial gainful activity levels
- SSI resource limits
- Interactions between the DI and SSI programs
- Work incentives
- Representative payees
- Stewardship

The Board's ultimate goal is to develop a compendium of issues for consideration. In the shorter term, separate reports on specific sets of issues will be published as issue briefs or as part of our statement on the SSI program that is included in SSA's annual report to the President and Congress on the SSI program.

How Do We Keep Older Workers in the Workforce?

Over the past several years, a large body of research and thought has been developed regarding retirement security and policies to encourage older workers to remain in the workforce. In an effort to bring much of this data together in a focused presentation, the Board agreed to hold a public discussion forum in January 2008. Planning began in late spring 2007 to identify possible presenters and a format for the day-long meeting. This forum was designed to provide a venue for presenting the latest ideas for eliminating disincentives and barriers to longer working lives and creating incentives for those older workers who wish to remain in the workforce. Our panelists include:

- Alicia Munnell (Boston College), John Shoven (Stanford University), and Gene Steuerle (Urban Institute) to present their research regarding older workers.
- John Martin (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development), Keith Brainard

(National Association of State Retirement Administrators), and Thomas Dowd (U.S. Department of Labor) to share perspectives on a wide-range of governmental policies.

- Cynthia Donohoe (BAE Systems HQ, Inc.), Kevin Mahoney (U.S. Office of Personnel Management), and Gerald Shea (AFL-CIO) to discuss their respective organizations work in the area of retaining older workers in the labor force.
- Edward P. Lazear, Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, was invited to be the luncheon speaker.

With the forum scheduled for January 18th, the Board ended the year anticipating the upcoming event which promised to be a very informative experience.

Board Research: Visits to the Frontline

The Urban Experience: Diverse Service Delivery Options in Chicago

With the wave of baby boomers approaching retirement age, SSA clearly faces major challenges in delivering services to an ever-increasing number of people. One way the agency is striving to deal with this challenge is to provide a wide variety of service options. In July 2007, the Board traveled to the Chicago Region to have a first hand look at many of SSA's service delivery options in action. The Chicago metropolitan area offered us the opportunity to visit agency field offices, teleservice and the program service center and hold in-depth discussions with a cross section of frontline employees. Another key organization in the service delivery arena is the disability determination services and to round out our examination of service delivery issues, we traveled to Madison, Wisconsin to meet with the managers and staff from the Wisconsin Disability Determination Bureau (DDB).

The visit began in the Chicago Regional Office where the region's executive staff discussed the challenges facing them, in particular severe resource limitations and the anticipated loss of staff as the result of the agency's own retirement wave. While employees work diligently to complete a lot of different workloads, the lack of resources is taking its toll. A potential counterbalance to changes in staffing levels and skill sets may be through the provision of a wide range of accessible and user-friendly electronic services. However, SSA's efforts to market the use of alternative service delivery options such as the Internet have been very limited. The executives emphasized to us that if the agency is to have any chance to continue to provide an acceptable level of customer service, then SSA must do more to encourage the public to use the Internet.

After meeting with regional executives, the Board participated in a series of overview sessions focusing on SSA's service delivery operations.

- Teleservice Center: Managers and staff explained that the Chicago teleservice center (TSC) is one of the agency's 37 call centers and responds to callers from anywhere in the country. The roles and responsibilities of the teleservice representatives (TSRs) have expanded over the years and as a result the TSCs have become another public face of SSA. During this session, TSRs demonstrated the Customer Help and Information Program and explained how this new

technology is one of the tools helping them improve customer service as well as improve the consistency of information provided to the public.

- **Field Offices:** The Board visited two field offices in the Chicago metropolitan area – the Lawndale and Chicago Loop offices. Employees candidly discussed their experience in dealing with the myriad of issues they face each day. Problems ranged from dealing with system response times to handling an ever increasing Social Security number workload due to the continued growth in immigration. We took this opportunity to ask employees about the advice they provide to the public about the claiming of retirement benefits.
- **Program Service Center:** During the visit to the Great Lakes Program Service Center (PSC), employees described their back-up role in handling calls to the 800 number. Even though there was recognition that the assistance they provide to the teleservice centers is invaluable in providing quick and efficient service to callers, they were concerned that other beneficiaries may not be getting the appropriate attention to their claims. The time that the PSC employees are away from processing post-entitlement workloads has contributed to the backlogs. However, they pointed out that other processing efficiencies have been gained because the PSCs are operating in an electronic environment where as much as 98 percent of their work is processed without traditional paper documents.
- **Disability Determination Services:** The primary focus of the Board’s visit to the Wisconsin Disability Determination Bureau (DDB) was to explore the state of the electronic disability claims process. While the DDB staff stated that the electronic case processing system did provide a number of efficiencies, they discussed at some length the work that must be done to finish the system. Until the system is fully electronic and data passes seamlessly between operating components, they will not be able to maximize the potential the system has for timely and accurately processing cases.

Service Delivery in Rural America: A Visit to Montana and the Denver Region

To continue our look into the agency’s practices, we visited the Denver Region to see how the agency delivers service to individuals in rural areas. The region covers 16.2 percent of the U.S. land mass (573,375 square miles), and the geographic distances make face-to-face service delivery much more of a challenge. One Board member observed: “In Montana, people who live in the northeast and northwest parts of the state might have to drive at least three hours to get to the closest Social Security office...if they have a car, or access to a car, and if they have the money for gas, and the roads are okay.”

The trip to the region began in Browning, Montana where we had the privilege of spending the day with members of the Blackfeet Tribe. The meeting with tribal leaders and individual members provided many insights into the challenges that SSA faces in servicing rural America, challenges that may be compounded by cultural barriers. Tribal members shared their experiences, both good and poor, with regard to the Social Security Administration. We heard about frustrations with the appellate process, as well as how this process can be derailed due to a lack of understanding about Native American customs and traditions. These cultural misunderstandings can have a detrimental effect on the claims process.

But we also heard about the important outreach efforts undertaken by SSA and the Montana DDS to overcome these barriers. While tribal members acknowledged these outreach efforts, they also stated that the agency needed to establish a permanent presence on the reservation.

The next stop was at the University of Great Falls where the Board spent a most stimulating morning with 60 undergraduate students. They expressed a great deal of interest in the future of the Social Security programs, and raised questions such as, “Is Social Security going to be around in the next decade?” and “What changes need to be made and what is the most important change?” This session was a learning experience for all of us.

During a visit to the Social Security field office in Great Falls, the staff described the challenges they face in processing large volumes of Social Security number applications from foreign-born applicants. The nearby national parks hire a significant number of foreign college students for the summer and all of these temporary employees need Social Security numbers. Securing the proper verification as well as submitting documents for language translation is a significant workload. Another unique aspect of serving the population in this area is the processing of a significant number of claims for benefits under the Canadian totalization agreement.

The Denver Region is a leader in identifying new ways to deliver high quality customer service. Because so many communities in the Region are quite remote, SSA has found videoconferencing to be an efficient way of serving the public: the cost of the equipment and DSL lines are less expensive than renting offices, and claimants as well as SSA staff are not required to travel long distances in order to transact business. Moreover, the Region is able to maintain the SSA tradition of delivering high quality personal service.

Likewise, the region is on the cutting edge of using videoconferencing technology to hold routine office-to-office meetings. We received a demonstration of how several offices can “meet” to discuss optimal ways to coordinate service delivery. Several employees from Huron, South Dakota and Bismarck, North Dakota field offices “joined” us in Great Falls through the videoconference medium.

We wrapped up our trip in Denver and held a series of informative meetings with the Regional Commissioner, the Acting Regional Chief Administrative Law Judge, and members of their respective staffs. While in the regional office, managers from various components met with us to present their perspectives on how service delivery can be made more effective and timely. Their solutions included changes in policy, improved technology, and process realignments.

During our meetings with the leadership of the regional Office of Disability Adjudication and Review, the role of videoconferencing was emphasized, most notably as a tool for increasing the number of ALJ hearings. Greater access to videoconferencing has allowed the region to move away from the need to hold hearings in temporary sites such as hotel rooms or in other locations that have limited security and internet access. The region has been able to facilitate hearings via videoconferencing by tapping into the Wyoming state videoconferencing sites.

This intensive visit to the Denver Region was an outstanding reminder for all of us of the unparalleled dedication that is ingrained in the fabric of the Social Security Administration and its remarkable employees.

Appendix

2007 Social Security Advisory Board Members

Sylvester J. Schieber, Chairman

Sylvester J. Schieber is a private consultant on retirement and health issues based in New Market, Maryland. He retired from Watson Wyatt Worldwide in September 2006 where he had served as Vice President/U.S. Director of Benefit Consulting and Director of Research and Information. From 1983, Dr. Schieber was the Director of Research at the Employee Benefit Research Institute. Earlier, he worked for the Social Security Administration as an economic analyst and as Deputy Director at the Office of Policy Analysis. Dr. Schieber is the author of numerous journal articles, policy analysis papers, and several books including: *Retirement Income Opportunities in An Aging America: Coverage and Benefit Entitlement*; *Social Security: Perspectives on Preserving the System*; and *The Real Deal: The History and Future of Social Security*. He served on the 1994 - 1996 Advisory Council on Social Security. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Notre Dame. First term of office: January 1998 to September 2003. Current term of office: October 2003 to September 2009. Appointed by the President in September 2006 to serve as Chairman of the Advisory Board from October 2006 to January 2009.

Dana K. Bilyeu

Dana K. Bilyeu is the Executive Officer of the Public Employees' Retirement System of Nevada. As the Executive Officer of the \$21 billion pension trust she is responsible for all aspects of fund management including analysis of plan funding, investment oversight, operational and strategic planning, and fiduciary and governance issues. In her capacity as the Executive Officer, Mrs. Bilyeu provides information and analysis to the Nevada Legislature in consideration of pension policy issues affecting state and local government. Prior to her appointment as the Executive Officer, Mrs. Bilyeu served for eight years as the System's Operations Officer, overseeing all aspects of benefit administration, including survivor, disability, and retirement benefit programs. Mrs. Bilyeu also was responsible for cost effectiveness measurement for all activities of the System. She was accountable for technology oversight as well as policy issues related to the public safety sector of public employment. As the System's legal counsel, Mrs. Bilyeu represented the System in a variety of aspects from benefits litigation, to contracts analysis, to Board governance. Mrs. Bilyeu is a member of the National Association of State Retirement Administrators, the National Council on Teacher Retirement, the National Conference of Public Employee Retirement Systems, and the National Association of Public Pension Attorneys. She also serves on the Public Employee Advisory Board for the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans. She received her Juris Doctor from California Western School of Law and her B.A. from the University of Arizona. Term of office: December 2006 to September 2010.

Jeffrey R. Brown

Jeffrey R. Brown is the William G. Karnes Professor in the Department of Finance at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Prior to joining the Illinois faculty, Dr. Brown was an assistant professor of public policy at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. During 2001-2002, he served as Senior Economist at the White House Council of Economic Advisers, where he focused primarily on Social Security, pension reform, and terrorism risk insurance. During 2001 he also served on the staff of the President's Commission to Strengthen Social Security. In January

2005, President Bush nominated Dr. Brown to the Social Security Advisory Board for a term ending September 2008. He is a Research Associate of the National Bureau of Economic Research, a Research Fellow with the Employee Benefits Research Institute, and a Senior Fellow of the China Center for Insurance and Social Security Research. Professor Brown is a member of the American Economic Association, the American Risk and Insurance Association, the National Academy of Social Insurance, and the Risk Theory Society.

Dr. Brown has published extensively on public and private insurance markets, including publications in *The American Economic Review*, *The Journal of Political Economy*, *The Journal of Public Economics*, *The Journal of Monetary Economics*, *The Journal of Risk and Insurance*, *The National Tax Journal*, and numerous books. He is the recipient of the Lumina Award for Outstanding Research in Insurance and E-Commerce. Professor Brown is co-author of the book, *The Role of Annuities in Financing Retirement* (MIT Press), and is co-founder and co-editor of *The Journal of Pension Economics and Finance*, published by Cambridge University Press. He has served as a consultant / expert panel member for the Executive Office of the President of the U.S., the Government Accountability Office, the U.S. Treasury, the World Bank, and several private firms. Prior to graduate school, he was a Brand Manager at the Procter & Gamble Company. Professor Brown holds a Ph.D. in economics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a Masters of Public Policy from Harvard University, and a B.A. from Miami University. Term of office: October 2006 to September 2008.

Dorcas R. Hardy

Dorcas R. Hardy is President of DRHardy & Associates, a government relations and public policy firm serving a diverse portfolio of clients. After her appointment by President Ronald Reagan as Assistant Secretary of Human Development Services, Ms. Hardy was appointed Commissioner of Social Security (1986 to 1989); later she was appointed by President George W. Bush to chair the Policy Committee of the 2005 White House Conference on Aging. Ms. Hardy has launched and hosted her own primetime, weekly television program, "Financing Your Future," on Financial News Network and UPI Broadcasting, and "The Senior American," an NET political program for older Americans. She speaks and writes widely about domestic and international retirement financing issues and entitlement program reforms and is the co-author of *Social Insecurity: The Crisis in America's Social Security System and How to Plan Now for Your Own Financial Survival*, Random House, 1992. A former CEO of a rehabilitation technology firm, Ms. Hardy promotes redesign and modernization of the Social Security, Medicare, and disability insurance systems. Additionally, she has chaired a Task Force to rebuild vocational rehabilitation services for disabled veterans for the Department of Veterans Affairs. She received her B.A. from Connecticut College, her M.B.A from Pepperdine University, and completed the Executive Program in Health Policy and Financial Management at Harvard University. Ms. Hardy is a Certified Senior Advisor and serves on the Board of Directors of Wright Investors Service Managed Funds, and First Coast Service Options of Florida. First term of office: April 2002 to September 2004. Current term of office: October 2004 to September 2010.

Marsha Rose Katz

Marsha Rose Katz is a Project Director at the University of Montana Rural Institute in Missoula, where her work has concentrated on assisting persons with disabilities to utilize Social Security work incentives to start their own businesses or engage in wage employment. Since coming to the Rural Institute in 1999, Ms. Katz has focused on providing training and technical assistance on both

employment and SSI/SSDI to rural, frontier and tribal communities across the country. Previously, she worked for nearly 20 years in a disability rights community based organization, the Association for Community Advocacy (ACA), a local Arc in Ann Arbor, Michigan. She served as both Vice President of ACA, and Director of its Family Resource Center. It was at ACA that Ms. Katz began her nearly 30 years of individual and systems advocacy regarding programs administered by SSA, especially the SSI and SSDI programs. Ms. Katz has written numerous articles and created many widely distributed user-friendly general handouts on SSI and SSDI, the majority of which focus on the impact of work on benefits, and utilizing work incentives. She is the author of *Don't Look for Logic: An Advocate's Manual for Negotiating the SSI and SSDI Programs*, published by the Rural Institute. Her Bachelor's and Master's Degrees are from the University of Michigan. Ms. Katz's many years of experience as a trainer, technical advisor, and advocate have been guided and informed by her partnership with people with disabilities, from her husband, Bob Liston, to the people she assisted in her work with ACA and the Arc Michigan, her current work at the Rural Institute, and her longstanding participation in ADAPT, the nation's largest cross-disability, grassroots disability rights organization. Term of office: November 2006 to September 2012.

Barbara B. Kennelly

Barbara B. Kennelly became President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare in April 2002 after a distinguished 23 year career in elected public office. Mrs. Kennelly served 17 years in the United States House of Representatives representing the First District of Connecticut. During her congressional career, she was the first woman elected to serve as the Vice Chair of the House Democratic Caucus. Mrs. Kennelly was also the first woman to serve on the House Committee on Intelligence and to chair one of its subcommittees. She was the first woman to serve as Chief Majority Whip, and the third woman in history to serve on the 200 year old Ways and Means Committee. During the 105th Congress, she was the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Social Security. Prior to her election to Congress, Mrs. Kennelly was Secretary of the State of Connecticut. After serving in Congress, she was appointed to the position of Counselor to the Commissioner at the Social Security Administration. As counselor, Mrs. Kennelly worked closely with the Commissioner of Social Security Kenneth S. Apfel and members of Congress to inform and educate the American people on the choices they face to ensure the future solvency of Social Security. She served on the Policy Committee for the 2005 White House Conference on Aging. Mrs. Kennelly received a B.A. in Economics from Trinity College, Washington, D.C. She earned a certificate from the Harvard Business School on completion of the Harvard-Radcliffe Program in Business Administration and a Master's Degree in Government from Trinity College, Hartford. Term of office: January 2006 to September 2011.

Mark J. Warshawsky

Mark J. Warshawsky is Director of Retirement Research at Watson Wyatt Worldwide, a global human capital consulting firm. He conducts and oversees research on employer-sponsored retirement programs and policies. A frequent speaker to business and professional groups, Dr. Warshawsky is a recognized thought leader on pensions, social security, insurance and health care financing. He has written numerous articles published in leading professional journals, books and working papers, and has testified before Congress on pensions, annuities and other economic issues. In addition to being a member of the Social Security Advisory Board, he is also on the Advisory Board of the Pension Research Council of the Wharton School.

From 2004 to 2006, Dr Warshawsky served as assistant secretary for economic policy at the U.S. Treasury Department. During his tenure, he played a key role in the development of the Administration's pension reform proposals, particularly pertaining to single-employer defined benefit plans, which were ultimately included in the Pension Protection Act (PPA) of 2006. He was also involved extensively in the formulation of Social Security reform proposals, and oversaw the Department's comprehensive 2005 study of the terror risk insurance program. In addition, Dr. Warshawsky led the efforts to update and enhance substantially the measures and disclosures in the Social Security and Medicare Trustees Reports, as well as the setting of the macroeconomic forecasts which underlie the administration's budget submissions to Congress.

Dr. Warshawsky's research was influential in the 2001-2 regulatory reform of minimum distribution requirements for qualified retirement plans, the increasing realization of the importance of financial protection against outliving one's financial resources in retirement, and a product innovation to integrate the immediate life annuity and long-term care insurance. For the latter research, he won a prize from the British Institute of Actuaries in 2001 for a professional article he co-authored. Favorable tax treatment for this integrated product was also included in PPA due to Dr. Warshawsky's advocacy. Dr. Warshawsky has also held senior-level economic research positions at the Internal Revenue Service, the Federal Reserve Board in Washington, D.C. and TIAA-CREF, where he established the Paul A. Samuelson Prize and organized several research conferences. A native of Chicago, he received a Ph.D. in Economics from Harvard University and a B.A with Highest Distinction from Northwestern University. Term of office: December 2006 to September 2012.

Legislation that Established the Social Security Advisory Board

In 1994, when Congress passed Public Law 103-296 establishing the Social Security Administration as an independent agency, it also created an independent, bipartisan Advisory Board to advise the President, the Congress, and the Commissioner of Social Security on matters related to the Social Security and Supplemental Security Income programs. Under this legislation, appointments to the Board are made by the President, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the President pro tempore of the Senate.

Advisory Board members are appointed to staggered six year terms, made up as follows: three appointed by the President (no more than two from the same political party); and two each (no more than one from the same political party) by the Speaker of the House (in consultation with the Chairman and the Ranking Minority Member of the Committee on Ways and Means) and by the President pro tempore of the Senate (in consultation with the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member of the Committee on Finance). Presidential appointments are subject to Senate confirmation. The President designates one member of the Board to serve as Chairman for a four year term, coincident with the term of the President, or until the designation of a successor.

The Board's Mandate

Public Law 103-296 as amended gives the Board the following functions:

- 1) analyzing the Nation's retirement and disability systems and making recommendations with respect to how the Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OASDI) programs and the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program, supported by other public and private systems, can most effectively assure economic security;
- 2) studying and making recommendations relating to the coordination of programs that provide health security with the OASDI and SSI programs;
- 3) making recommendations to the President and to the Congress with respect to policies that will ensure the solvency of the OASDI programs, both in the short term and the long term;
- 4) making recommendations with respect to the quality of service that the Social Security Administration provides to the public;
- 5) making recommendations with respect to policies and regulations regarding the OASDI and SSI programs;
- 6) increasing public understanding of Social Security;
- 7) making recommendations with respect to a long-range research and program evaluation plan for the Social Security Administration;
- 8) reviewing and assessing any major studies of Social Security as may come to the attention of the Board; and making recommendations with respect to such other matters as the Board determines to be appropriate.

2007 Board Operations and Communications

Addresses—In July 2007, Chairman Schieber addressed the Association of Administrative Law Judges in Providence, Rhode Island. In August, he spoke at a meeting of the Retirement Research Consortium in Washington, D.C. Also in August, Staff Director Katherine Thornton addressed a conference of Independent Living Centers in Phoenix. In October, Board Member Dorcas Hardy spoke at a meeting of the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research in Richmond, and Staff Director Katherine Thornton addressed the National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives in St. Louis.

Communications—In January, the Board wrote to members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees asking that fiscal year 2007 administrative funding for the Social Security Administration (SSA) be significantly increased. In May, the Board wrote a letter to the Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board (FASAB) transmitting the members' comments on FASAB's document, "Preliminary Views on Accounting for Social Insurance, Revised." Also in May, the Board again wrote to members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees urging sufficient administrative funding for SSA. In July, the Board wrote to the Office of Management and Budget asking that office to expedite the issuance of the regulations that would suspend implementation of SSA's Service Improvement Initiative. In October, the Board sent a letter to SSA Commissioner Michael Astrue informing him of the Board's July visit to SSA offices in the Chicago region.

Tribal Listening Session—In October, the Board met with members of the Blackfeet Nation in Browning, Montana to discuss concerns about SSA's service delivery and to hear their suggestions on how service could be improved to the tribe's 16,000 members. The Board met with Earl Old Person, Chairman of the Blackfeet Tribe, and a number of other tribal leaders and members.

Meetings—From January 2007 through December 2007, the Board met at its offices seven times, and held 1 one conference call. In August, the Board held a joint meeting with members of the 2007 Technical Panel on Assumptions and Methods in Washington, D.C. to discuss the Panel's deliberations and recommendations. In addition, the Board made two site visits for the purpose of gathering and evaluating information related to the operation of the disability programs, the Social Security hearings and appeals process, and aspects of SSA's public service.

Publications—From January 2007 through December 2007, the Board issued one report, Annual Report: Calendar Year 2006 (August 2007). In April, the Board published Issue Brief #3, Recruiting SSA Administrative Law Judges: Need for Review of OPM Role and Performance, and in May, it commented on the Supplemental Security Income Program in the Social Security Administration's Annual Report of the Supplemental Security Income Program.

Testimony—In February, Chairman Schieber testified before the House of Representatives' Subcommittee on Social Security regarding the Social Security disability backlogs.

Staff Changes—Staff Director Joe Humphreys retired in July. Deputy Staff Director Katherine Thornton was named Staff Director immediately upon his retirement. In September, Deborah Sullivan was named as Deputy Staff Director.

Compendium of Board Reports and Publications

1. *Annual Report, Calendar Year 2006* (August 2007). The Board has prepared annual reports since 1998. The reports were prepared on a Fiscal Year basis from 1998 to 2002.
2. “Statement on the Supplemental Security Income Program,” Additional Statement by the Social Security Advisory Board in the *Annual Report of the Supplemental Security Income Program, Social Security Administration*, May 2007. The Board has prepared these statements annually since 1998. In 2006 the Board also published this statement as the *Social Security Advisory Board Issue Brief #2*.
3. *Issue Brief #3: Recruiting SSA Administrative Law Judges: Need for Review of OPM Role and Performance*, April 2007.
4. *A Disability System for the 21st Century*, September 2006.
5. *Improving the Social Security Administration’s Hearing Process*, September 2006.
6. *Disability Decision Making: Data and Materials* (2nd ed.), May 2006.
7. *Issue Brief #1: The Impact of Immigration on Social Security and the National Economy*, December 2005.
8. *Social Security: Why Action Should Be Taken Soon* (3rd ed.), September 2005.
9. *Retirement Security: The Unfolding of a Predictable Surprise*, March 2005.
10. *The Social Security Definition of Disability*, October 2003.
11. *The 2003 Technical Panel on Assumptions and Methods, Report to the Social Security Advisory Board*, October 2003.
12. *Introducing Non-adversarial Government Representatives to Improve the Record for Decision in Social Security Disability Adjudications, A Report to the Social Security Advisory Board*, June 2003.
13. *SSA’s Obligation to Ensure that the Public’s Funds are Responsibly Collected and Expended*, March 2002.
14. *Alternative Approaches to Judicial Review of Social Security Disability Cases: A Report to the Social Security Advisory Board*, March 2002.
15. *Challenges Facing the New Commissioner of Social Security*, Statement by Stanford G. Ross, December 2001.
16. *Estimating the Real Rate of Return on Stocks Over the Long Term, Papers presented to the Social Security Advisory Board*, August 2001.

17. *Social Security: Why Action Should Be Taken Soon* (Revised Edition), July 2001. The Board issued this report originally in July 1998.
18. *Agenda for Social Security: Challenges for the New Congress and the New Administration*, February 2001.
19. *Charting the Future of Social Security's Disability Programs: The Need for Fundamental Change*, January 2001.
20. *Disability Decision Making: Data and Materials*, January 2001.
21. *The Technical Panel on Assumptions and Methods, Report to the Social Security Advisory Board*, November 1999.
22. *How the Social Security Administration Can Improve Its Service to the Public*, September 1999.
23. *Forum on the Implications of Raising the Social Security Retirement Age*, May 1999 (staff document).
24. *How SSA's Disability Programs Can Be Improved*, August 1998.
25. *Social Security: Why Action Should Be Taken Soon*, July 1998.
26. *Strengthening Social Security Research: The Responsibilities of the Social Security Administration*, January 1998.
27. *Increasing Public Understanding of Social Security*, September 1997.
28. *Forum on a Long Range Research and Program Evaluation Plan for the Social Security Administration: Proceedings and Additional Comments*, June 24, 1997 (staff document).
29. *Developing Social Security Policy: How the Social Security Administration Can Provide Greater Policy Leadership*, March 1997.

Most reports are available on the Board's web site at www.ssab.gov

Individuals with Whom the Board Met in 2007

January

Jo Anne Barnhart, Commissioner of Social Security
Kelly Croft, Chief Quality Officer, SSA
Alan Lane, Deputy Chief Quality Officer, SSA
Manuel J. Vaz, Boston Regional Commissioner, SSA
Beatrice Disman, New York Regional Commissioner, SSA
Laurie Watkins, Philadelphia Regional Commissioner, SSA
Leon Rhodes, Atlanta Deputy Regional Commissioner, SSA
James F. Martin, Chicago Regional Commissioner, SSA
Ramona Schuenemeyer, Dallas Regional Commissioner, SSA
Michael Grochowski, Kansas City Regional Commissioner, SSA
Nancy Berryhill, Denver Regional Commissioner, SSA
Peter D. Spencer, San Francisco Regional Commissioner, SSA
Carl Rabun, Seattle Regional Commissioner, SSA
Linda McMahon, Deputy Commissioner for Operations, SSA
Mary Glenn-Croft, Assistant Deputy Commissioner for Operations, SSA
Mary Chatel, Executive Director, Disability Service Improvement, SSA
Martin Gerry, Deputy Commissioner for Disability and Income Security Programs, SSA
Pat Jonas, Assistant Deputy Commissioner for Disability and Income Security Programs, SSA
Bob Emrich, Associate Commissioner for Medical and Vocational Expertise and
Director of the Federal DDS, SSA
Bill Gray, Deputy Commissioner for Systems, SSA
Jerry Berson, Assistant Deputy Commissioner for Systems, SSA

February

Alan Cohen, Senior Budget Advisor, U.S. Senate Committee on Finance
Tom Klouda, Professional Staff, U.S. Senate Committee on Finance
Steve Robinson, Social Security Advisor, U.S. Senate Committee on Finance
Jennifer Smith, SSA Detailee, U.S. Senate Committee on Finance
Suzanne Payne, SSA Detailee, U.S. Senate Committee on Finance
Neil Holland, SSA Detailee, U.S. Senate Committee on Finance
Michael Astrue, Commissioner, SSA
Dale Sopper, Deputy Commissioner of Finance, Acquisition and Management, SSA
Bob Rothenberg, Associate Commissioner, Budget, SSA
Ellen Bryson, Chief, Division of Program Budget, SSA

March

Martin Holmer, President of the Policy Simulation Group
Joyce Manchester, Director of Division of Economic Research, SSA
Noah Meyerson, Congressional Budget Office
John Sabelhaus, Congressional Budget Office
Melissa Favreault, Senior Research Associate, Urban Institute
Tom L. Allen, Chairman, Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board
Robert Dacey, Member and Chief Accountant, GAO
Wendy Combs, Executive Director, Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board
Mark Laisch, Majority Staff, Senate Budget Committee

April

Michael Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security
Tom Hughes, Chief Information Officer, SSA
Bill Gray, Deputy Commissioner for Systems, SSA
Peter Orszag, Director of the Congressional Budget Office
Paul Cullinan, Chief of the Human Resources Cost Estimates Unit, Congressional Budget Office

May

Dale Sopper, Deputy Commissioner for Budget, Finance and Management, SSA

Phil Kelly, Acting Deputy Associate Commissioner for Budget, SSA

Larry Miller, Director Office of Administrative Budget, SSA

Steve Goss, Chief Actuary, SSA

Rick Foster, Chief Actuary, CMS

Alice Wade, Office of the Chief Actuary, SSA

June

John L. Palmer, Public Trustee for the OASDI Trust Fund

Thomas R. Saving, Public Trustee for the OASDI Trust Fund

Michael Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security

Patrick O'Carroll, SSA Inspector General

James Kissko, SSA Deputy Inspector General

Doug Cunningham, SSA OIG Staff

July (Visit to the Chicago Region)

James Martin, Chicago Regional Commissioner, SSA

Marcia Mosley, Deputy Regional Commissioner, SSA

Donna Calvert, Chicago Regional Chief Counsel, SSA

William J. Cotter, Jr., Chicago Regional Special Agent in Charge, SSA

Thomas Zimmer, Chicago Regional Director of the Office of Quality Performance, SSA

Judy Fryback, Director, Wisconsin Disability Determination Bureau (DDB)

Great Lakes Program Service Center Staff

Chicago Regional Office Staff

Chicago Teleservice Center Staff

Staff in the Chicago Lawndale and Chicago Loop SSA Field Offices

Staff in the Wisconsin DDB

August

Dan Crippen, Chair, 2007 Technical Panel on Assumptions and Methods

William Hsiao, Member, 2007 Technical Panel on Assumptions and Methods

Steve Lieberman, Member, 2007 Technical Panel on Assumptions and Methods

Deborah Lucas, Member, 2007 Technical Panel on Assumptions and Methods

Jeffrey Passel, Member, 2007 Technical Panel on Assumptions and Methods

P.J. Eric Stallard, Member, 2007 Technical Panel on Assumptions and Methods

Thomas R. Saving, Public Trustee for the OASDI Trust Fund

Ted Gayer, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Microeconomic Analysis, Department of Treasury

Jim Duggan, Treasury Staff Representative, Department of Treasury

Zenaida M. Samaniego, Chief Actuary Office of Policy and Research, Employee Benefits Security Administration, Department of Labor

David Langdon, Economist, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Department of Labor

Joyce Manchester, Director Division of Economic Research, SSA

Mike Leonesio, Liaison to Public Trustees, SSA

Howard Iams, Senior Researcher, SSA

David Pattison, Senior Researcher, SSA

Paul Davies, Senior Researcher, SSA

Stephen Goss, Chief Actuary, SSA

Alice Wade, Deputy Chief Actuary, SSA

Eli Donkar, Deputy Chief Actuary, SSA

Clare McFarland, Deputy Director Medicare & Medicaid Cost Estimates Group, Office of the Actuary, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

Mark Freeland, Deputy Director, National Health Statistics Group, Office of the Actuary, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

Todd Caldis, Office of the Actuary, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

Bridget Dickensheets, Office of the Actuary, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
Randy Matsunaga, Office of the Actuary, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
Michael Simpson, Long-term Modeling Unit, Congressional Budget Office
Julie Topoleski, Long-term Modeling Unit, Congressional Budget Office
Eugene Steuerle, Senior Fellow, Urban Institute
Sandy Wise, Staff, National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare

September (Board Conference Call) No formal Board meeting

October (Visit to the Denver Region)

Earl Old Person (Chairman) and other members of the Blackfeet Native American Tribe
College students at the University of Great Falls, Great Falls, Montana
Staff in the Great Falls SSA Field Office
Staff in the Huron, South Dakota and Bismarck, North Dakota SSA Field Offices (by
videoconference)
Nancy Berryhill, Denver Regional Commissioner, SSA
Michael Heitz, Denver Acting Chief Administrative Law Judge, SSA
Patrick Augustine, Denver Hearing Office Chief Administrative Law Judge, SSA
Denver Regional Office Staff
Denver Regional Hearing Office Staff
Denver Hearing Office Staff

November No Board meeting

December (2 Day Meeting)

Michael Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security
Frank Cristaudo, Chief Administrative Law Judge, SSA
Nancy Griswold, Deputy Chief Administrative Law Judge, SSA
Berthy de la Rosa-Aponte, Chair, Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Advisory Panel
Jill Houghton, Executive Director, Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Advisory Panel
Mike Anzick, Staff Member, Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Advisory Panel
David Stapleton, Mathematica Policy Research
Jon Eisenberg, Executive Director, National Academy of Science
Stephen Holden, Committee Member, National Academy of Science
Lynnette Millett, Study Director and Senior Program Officer, National Academy of Science

Board Staff

Katherine A. Thornton, Staff Director

Katherine Thornton was appointed as the Staff Director for the Social Security Advisory in July 2007. Prior to being named to this position she served as the Deputy Staff Director to the Board. Before coming to the Board in 2005, Ms. Thornton held several senior management positions in the Social Security Administration. From 1995-2002, she was the Director of the Center for Disability Programs in the Philadelphia region before relocating to SSA's Baltimore headquarters. While in headquarters, she held a leadership position in the development of SSA's eDib project and had a temporary appointment as a program manager with the International Social Security Association in Geneva Switzerland. During her tenure at the Social Security Administration, Kate was the recipient of several agency awards, including 3 Commissioner's Citations for her work in the disability programs. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology and Social Work from Western Michigan University.

Deborah Sullivan, Deputy Staff Director

Deborah (Debi) Sullivan joined the Social Security Advisory Board staff in September 2007 as the Deputy Staff Director. Before joining the Board staff, she was a participant in the Social Security Administration's (SSA's) Senior Executive Service Candidate Program and did extensive work on the agency's most recent disability service improvement initiatives. Ms. Sullivan began working for SSA as a claims representative in Columbus, Indiana in 1978 and has held increasingly more responsible supervisory and managerial positions throughout her career. She worked in a number of SSA field offices and the Regional Offices in both Chicago and Atlanta. In 2002, she relocated to SSA's headquarters in Baltimore to become the Executive Officer of SSA's strategic planning component which was responsible for the publication of the agency's annual planning documents and periodic strategic plans. During her tenure at the Social Security Administration, Ms. Sullivan was the recipient of many awards including 5 Commissioner's Citations and a National Performance Award. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in History and Political Science from Ball State University and has completed additional graduate work at Emory University in Atlanta.

Joel A. Feinleib

Joel Feinleib joined the Advisory Board as Staff Economist in 2005 focusing on long-term financing issues, reform proposals, and empirical research. He previously worked as a research consultant and policy analyst in Washington D.C. and Chicago specializing in the economic, demographic and statistical analysis of social policy issues including welfare policy, drug control policy, environmental health and HIV/AIDS prevention. He holds a B.S. in Economics from The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania and a Masters in Public Policy Studies from the University of Chicago.

Beverly Rollins

Beverly Rollins began her career with the Federal Government as a claims representative for the Social Security Administration in the Rockville, Maryland field office. She held a number of jobs with SSA, including senior executive analyst for both the Associate Commissioner of Hearings and Appeals and the Deputy Commissioner for Programs. In 1995, she worked with the National Commission on Childhood Disability, serving as an executive assistant to the Staff Director. Prior to working for the

Federal Government, Ms. Rollins worked as a social worker for the Head Start program and the West Virginia Department of Welfare. Since joining the Board staff in 1996, she has served as Executive Officer. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Social Work from West Virginia University and a Master's degree in General Administration from the University of Maryland.

George Schuette

Before joining the Advisory Board staff in 1999, George Schuette worked for the Kentucky Department for Human Resources and the Social Security Administration, taught in colleges, and served in the Army. He began working for SSA as a generalist claims representative in Cincinnati in 1977. In 1980 he moved to Baltimore to work in the Office of Training. He worked in staff and management positions in a variety of areas, including analyst training, management training, programmatic training, evaluation, and career development. He was involved in the introduction of new technologies to the agency, including personal computers, computer-based training, and interactive video. He has a Ph.D. in history from Duke University.

David Warner

David Warner began his career with the Federal Government in 1988 as a budget and program analyst for the Office of the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services in Washington, D.C. He worked principally on the administrative budget for the Medicare program and the program and administrative budgets for Medicaid and the Social Security Administration. Mr. Warner transferred to the Social Security Administration in 1995. Until 1998, he served as a senior social insurance specialist and executive officer for the Deputy Commissioner for Legislation and Congressional Affairs. In 1998, Mr. Warner completed a developmental assignment as professional staff to the Social Security Subcommittee of the House Committee on Ways and Means. Since joining the staff of the Social Security Advisory Board in 1999, he has served as professional staff to the Board. He holds a Bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Wisconsin and a Master's degree in public sector and non-profit financial management from the University of Maryland.

Jean Von Ancken

Jean Von Ancken began working for the Federal Government in 1997 when she came to work for the Board as a member of the staff. She previously taught music education in elementary schools in both Kansas City, MO and Northern Virginia. She holds a Bachelor's degree in music education.

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