Social Security Advisory Board
Minutes
Board Meeting
May 7-8, 2014

Location: Boston, Massachusetts

Time:
8:45 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (May 7)
8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (May 8)

SSAB Members:
Barbara Kennelly, Acting Chair
Bernadette Franks-Ongoy
Jagadeesh Gokhale
Dorcas Hardy

SSAB Staff:
Claire Green, Staff Director
Jackie Chapin
Joel Feinleib
Lynn Fisher
Emery MacFarlane
Sarah Weaver
Sterling Laudon

Participants

Center for Retirement Research:
Alicia H. Munnell, Director, Center for Retirement Research, Boston College
Rick Miller, Founder, Sensible Financial Planning
Anek Belbase, Research Project Manager, Center for Retirement Research, Boston College
Matthew Rutledge, Research Economist, Center for Retirement Research, Boston College
Andrew Eschtruth, Associate Director for External Relations, Center for Retirement Research, Boston College
Jean-Pierre Aubry, Assistant Director of State and Local Research, Center for Retirement Research, Boston College
Anthony Webb, Senior Research Economist, Center for Retirement Research, Boston College

National Bureau of Economic Research:
Jim Poterba, President, National Bureau of Economic Research
Raj Chetty, Co-director, Public Economics Program, Faculty Research Fellow and Research Associate, National Bureau of Economic Research
Jeff Liebman, Malcolm Wiener Professor of Public Policy, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University
Amy Finkelstein, Co-director, Public Economics Program and Research Associate, National Bureau of Economic Research
Brigitte Madrian, Co-director of the Household Finance Working Group and Research Associate, National Bureau of Economic Research
In May, the Board visited Boston, Massachusetts for a series of meetings over a two-day period. On the first day, the Board met with scholars at the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College to discuss retirement policy. The Board spoke with economists about the financial security of retirees and discussed options for reducing retirement risk. Afterward, scholars briefed the Board about the status of state and local pensions and how reform could impact employees.

In the afternoon, the Board travelled to the National Bureau of Economic Research for another series of discussions. The Board questioned economists about retirement savings and incentives to increase savings for retirement. The Board discussed the state of the Social Security Disability Insurance program and the causes of increased costs. Then the Board conversed with scholars about the impact of Medicaid expansion on health and the budget.

On the second day, the Board met with Congressional staff responsible for constituent service related to Social Security. The Board received feedback about Social Security programs and offered advice about interaction with SSA staff. Next, the Board traveled to the Boston Regional Office for meeting with executives and management. The Board solicited ideas from the regional office about ways to improve service to the public, reduce fraud, and manage the disability adjudication process. Representatives from the Office of Disability Adjudication and Review discussed initiatives to improve the quality of decisions made by administrative law judges and processes used to monitor progress.
Afterward, the Board traveled to a SSA field office to observe interaction with the public and to speak with employees about ground-level concerns. Field office staff discussed their accomplishments and suggested methods for improving service to the public. The Board then met with a Cooperative Disability Investigations unit and learned about efforts to catch individuals fraudulently obtaining Social Security benefits. Finally, the Board met with union representatives for SSA administrative law judges (ALJs). The Board listened to concerns from the representatives about SSA policies impacting ALJs and suggested reforms that could be taken to improve conditions.

I certify that the minutes written for the May 7-8, 2014 meeting of the Social Security Advisory Board are correct.

Barbara B. Kennelly

Acting Chair
Social Security Advisory Board