

## **Resolution**

# **Social Security Field Office Closings and Service Cuts**

**Whereas** the Social Security Administration (SSA) has seen its budget frozen or reduced in each of the past several years and only a slight increase in FY 2018 and have offered its staff buyouts and early retirements resulting in 3,500 fewer staff in Field Office and 400 at teleservice centers since 2010 to handle an ever increasing work load of retirement and disability applications, as well as the other essential services that SSA field offices provide to the public; and

**Whereas** the FY 2019 House appropriations bill included report language that Field Offices be provided not less than \$3,475,000,000 but that language was taken out in conference; and

**Whereas** in recent years, SSA has closed 125 or one out of every 10 field offices and all 533 contact stations around the country since 2000, and reduced hours so that offices are open to the public only until noon on Wednesdays and close 1 ½ hours early on other weekdays. This represents a 28 percent reduction in time spent helping people face-to-face to gain access to their benefits under Social Security and contributed to a busy signal 12% of the time and average wait time of 16 minutes; and

**Whereas** Social Security beneficiaries have always received, have



had the right to receive, and indeed have already paid to receive, the highest quality personal service offered to nearly 62 million program participants; and

**Whereas** high-quality service is threatened both by budget cuts and by a concerted effort on the part of the agency to nearly eliminate field offices and personal service as described in a recent document produced by a seven member panel of the National Academy of Public Administration under contract to the Social Security Administration, which included three former high-ranking SSA officials; and

**Whereas** the SSA 2014-2018 Agency Strategic Plan specifically cites the “Vision 2025” plan referenced above, and thereby has signaled high-level support for this approach that is hostile to the interests of the American people; and

**Whereas** public confidence in SSA’s ability to deliver on its promises is being threatened by the continuous announcements of office closures, reduced office hours around the nation, and service reductions at field offices; and

**Whereas** SSA has decided to stop providing two essential documents at SSA field offices, the Social Security Number Printout and the Benefit Verification statement, and the millions of people who come to field offices to get these documents will be told they must go online and print them out, request that prospective employers verify their Social Security Numbers, ask other service-providers to get the information themselves, or contact the Call Center and wait a week or more to receive these vital verifications needed to receive assistance from other service-providers or to verify eligibility to work;



**Therefore, be it resolved** that the Alliance for Retired Americans supports and will work for the passage of legislation introduced by Rep. Brian Higgins (D-NY) , H.R. 5431, the Social Security Accountability Act of 2018, to impose an immediate moratorium on further closures until SSA explains its plan for future closings, the reasoning for it, and how it will mitigate the impact on the public; and

**Be it further resolved** that the Alliance for Retired Americans supports the Social Security Administrative Fairness Act, , S. 3147 and H.R. 6251, sponsored by Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Representative John Larson (D-CT), which would permanently set the funding for the Social Security Administration’s administrative expense at 1.5% of benefits, which would result in no more rapid depletion of the Social Security Trust Fund assets; and

**Be it further resolved** that the Alliance for Retired Americans, the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) and other unions will work with the Social Security Works Coalition, the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations and community organizations, to expand the resources and front-line staffing available for SSA operations, fight to restore field office service delivery as the most critical part of the SSA infrastructure and warn the public about the risks of lost benefits inherent in SSA’s self-service option; and

**Be it further resolved** that the Social Security Administration place a moratorium on Social Security Office closings and services cuts.