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STREAMLINING THE HEARING OFFICE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Savings of Almost \$20 Million Dollars Annually

The Association of Administrative Law Judges (AALJ) is striving to improve the adjudication of Social Security disability claims. To that end, the AALJ proposes the streamlining of the hearing office management structure. Our proposed changes will result in approximately \$20 million in savings, but more importantly, the savings can be used to help reduce the disability backlog by deploying personnel to perform program work.

According to the various Regional Home Pages found on the SSA Intranet, there are currently 437 Group Supervisors (GSs) in the 166 hearing offices. The GSs generally keep track of cases and supervise the clerical and writing staff.

The management structure of each office should be changed to be comprised of the following management officials: The Hearing Office Chief Administrative Law Judge (supervisor of the ALJs), the Hearing Office Director (supervisor of the clerical and administrative staff) and a Supervising Attorney (GS 14; supervisor of the attorneys and paralegals). For offices with more than 10 Judges, an Assistant Hearing Office Director should be added because of the additional clerical staff and workload.

This proposal should reduce the number of GSs from 437 to 238, a reduction of 199 GSs.

Assuming that all GSs are near the top of the pay scale (Step 5), i.e. approximately \$91,000 per year, a salary savings of \$18,109,000 could be realized annually with the above reduction in personnel. The cost of benefits is about another 31%. Therefore, the total cost savings of reducing the prevalence of GSs would be about \$23,722,790 annually. Offset against that figure would be the cost of the higher graded Supervising Attorney, approximately \$18,000 more per employee per hearing office, for a total of \$2,988,000; with 31% increase in benefits, the total additional cost would be \$3,914,280.

This proposal should add 199 GSs - 415,512 work hours - to perform the clerical and decision drafting functions in the hearing offices to reduce the backlog.

The net savings, in terms of dollars, by replacing GSs with one Supervisory Attorney and, in some offices, an Assistant Hearing Office Director, is \$19,748,510.