



America's Disabled Workers Once Again in Crosshairs of Current Social Security Leadership, Says AALJ

WASHINGTON — Nov. 16, 2020 — The [Association of Administrative Law Judges](#), the professional association of Administrative Law Judges who rule on disability cases, strongly objects to the Social Security Administration's (SSA) current leadership's latest action to eliminate independent reviews of Americans' disability claims.

SSA has proceeded with its effort to allow employees who answer to administration leadership to be allowed to hear initial disability hearings. SSA had the rule published today in the [Federal Register](#), meaning it will take effect in one month (Dec. 16).

AALJ says the move flies in the face of a bipartisan congressional coalition that's introduced the [Administrative Law Judge Competitive Service Restoration Act](#) in the House; in the Senate, Senator Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) and Senator Susan Collins (R-Maine) have introduced the [ALJ Competitive Service Restoration Act](#). [Congressional members](#) urge SSA to withdraw this rule, because it violates the law and erodes due process.

"At a time when essential workers and all hard-working Americans need fairness and reason, Social Security's leaders are taking a different and radical approach," says Judge Melissa McIntosh, president of the AALJ. "These attorney advisors, who are called 'appeals judges' by SSA, will not have the independence nor experience workers can count on right now. Every American who works has paid into the disability fund and they have every legal right to request support when they feel they are injured or have a disability and can't work. This is a standard that our country has met for decades, throughout multiple administrations, until now."

SSA officials are also claiming there's a backlog of disability cases which could be used to legitimize this step, when, in fact, official data says no backlog exists.

"Administrative law judges are very proud to serve the American public and take seriously the responsibility of ensuring their due process rights. We believe the public deserves a well-qualified, impartial administrative judiciary removed from political pressure," says Judge McIntosh.

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MEDIA CONTACT:

Adam Shapiro

Adam.Shapiro@ASPR.bz

202-427-3603