

Social Security Advisory Board

December 16, 2008

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Sylvester J. Schieber

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- Dorcas R. Hardy
- Marsha Rose Katz
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- Mark Warshawsky

Staff Director

Katherine Thornton

Susan M. Daniels
James Roosevelt
Transition Team for the President-Elect
Social Security Administration
400 Virginia Ave, SW Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Ms. Daniels and Mr. Roosevelt:

When the Social Security Advisory Board was established in 1994, it was directed to provide advice to the President, the Congress, and the Commissioner of Social Security on matters pertaining to the Retirement, Survivors, and Disability programs, as well as the Supplemental Security Income program. During the past 14 years, the Board has issued over 40 reports and issue briefs that have recommended improvements in program administration, development and application of policies, and service delivery. The report that we are submitting to the President-Elect's Transition Team is a reflection of our past study as well as an analysis of the current state of the Social Security Administration.

The Social Security Administration has a strong commitment to the programs it administers and to the public that it serves; and it has carried out these responsibilities admirably over the past 70 years. However, the Social Security Advisory Board believes that the agency has reached a tipping point wherein continuing to do business with outdated 20th century tools hinders its ability to meet the needs and expectations of the American public. SSA needs to develop a vision and focus on the integration of processes, investment in a modern technology platform, and development of a highly skilled and creative workforce. This will not be an easy task, but we believe that with proper planning and implementation of new business processes, it will, once again, be regarded as a premier federal agency.

In addition, the Board is charged with making recommendations with respect to policies that will ensure the solvency of the old-age, survivors, and disability insurance programs, both in the short-term and the long-term. In that capacity, we would be remiss if we did not voice our concern over the vacancies in the Public Trustees positions, which have not been filled since late 2007. It is important for the credibility of the Trustees Reports that these positions be filled quickly by diligent, fair and knowledgeable people



who act with integrity in a bipartisan manner, and that the positions be filled by early summer, so that the 2010 Trustees Report can reflect their influence and views.

We greatly appreciate the opportunity that we had last week to share our perspectives with you. The attached report expands on a number of those ideas and highlights the challenges that confront the Social Security Administration in the near term and into the future.

If you or members of your staff have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact any one of the Board members or Kate Thornton, Staff Director, at 202-475-7700.

Sincerely,

Sylvester J. Schieber
Chairman

Attachment