



# Office of the Inspector General

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

June 29, 2024

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Chairman  
Committee on Finance  
United States Senate  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jason Smith  
Chairman  
Committee on Ways and Means  
United States House of Representatives  
1139 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Finance  
U.S. Senate  
239 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Neal  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Ways and Means  
U.S. House of Representatives  
372 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Wyden and Smith, Ranking Members Crapo and Neal:

Today marks my final day as I retire as Inspector General of the Social Security Administration (SSA). I want to thank President Donald J. Trump for nominating me for this position and the U.S. Senate for confirming me. Since I was sworn in on January 24, 2019, as the fourth Senate-confirmed Inspector General for SSA, it has been an honor serving our nation and working with the dedicated employees of the Office of the Inspector General (OIG).

While there is the tendency in our nation's capital to focus on the negative, I believe it is important for both the U.S. Congress and the individuals who have dedicated their tireless efforts to SSA OIG to understand what we have achieved.

In the last five years, SSA OIG's Office of Audit (OA) issued 257 audits that identified over \$8.2 billion in questioned costs and over \$7.3 billion in funds put to better use. In the same time frame, SSA OIG's Office of Investigations (OI) contributed to over \$1.4 billion in monetary accomplishments, which includes court-ordered restitution, recoveries, settlements, judgments, fines, civil and administrative actions, and estimated savings resulting from investigations.

When I was sworn in as the Inspector General, one of my key goals was to make an impact that would help the most vulnerable individuals in our country. I intended to utilize my private sector experience to help modernize SSA OIG to be more agile and to think innovatively and to ensure SSA works to provides the most efficient and effective service for the American public. I believe we achieved these goals during my tenure.

SSA OIG moved away from a status quo approach of each auditor completing one audit per year that focused on fixing errors rather than identifying the root cause of issues. SSA OIG needed to produce larger and more complex audits to address the root cause of the issues facing SSA. We recognized a team approach would reduce the number of audits per year, but we were confident it would increase the quality and impact of our work. This approach was effective. For several fiscal years (FY), while we adapted to this new approach, our auditors

produced fewer but more meaningful audits with the primary focus to improve SSA's programs and operations.

The Cooperative Disability Investigations (CDI) program is one of SSA and SSA OIG's most successful anti-fraud initiatives focusing on reviewing and identifying disability fraud before benefits are paid. In 2021, we established a "Hub Model" that allowed for a single CDI unit to provide CDI coverage to more than one state. This approach permitted us to meet the Congressional mandate from the *Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015* to provide coverage in all fifty states and U.S. territories, while also achieving cost-savings. Over \$8.1 billion has been saved since the inception of the CDI program.

Since I was sworn-in as Inspector General, SSA OIG has identified and is responding to new and evolving challenges and threats, including pervasive government imposter scams, cybersecurity and artificial intelligence (AI) issues, and the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. SSA OIG adapted successfully to these challenges by committing significant resources, building a more agile organization, and embracing a culture of internal and external communication and collaboration.

Early in my tenure, we saw the rise of government imposter scams and recognized the need to act swiftly and comprehensively to respond. SSA OIG developed a multidisciplinary approach to combatting and preventing imposter scams that included education and outreach, civil enforcement, and criminal investigations. National "Slam the Scam" Day, the brainchild of SSA OIG, has now been held each of the past five years and represents government at its best – collaboration across the government and private sector to protect the members of the public from scammers seeking to steal their money and personal information.

SSA OIG also established a new division, the Major Case Unit, to investigate these and other complex fraud schemes. SSA OIG has also become a leader in understanding AI and responding to the potential threat it represents to the public. We created an AI task force and are collaborating with SSA on AI initiatives.

SSA OIG's OI has played a critical role in investigations related to the misuse of Federal COVID-19 pandemic relief funds. Using stolen identities and Social Security numbers was critical to pandemic relief-related fraud. SSA OIG participated in over two dozen pandemic fraud-related workgroups and collaborated with other federal, state, and local law enforcement entities on joint investigations.

Further, I am extremely proud of the work SSA OIG accomplished as a member of the National COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Taskforce, led by the Deputy Attorney General of the United States. Addressing pandemic fraud required SSA OIG to shift workloads. However, it was essential for SSA OIG to contribute to hundreds of investigations related to the misuse of funds and fraud of COVID-19 pandemic relief programs.

I also built a stronger information technology (IT) component within SSA OIG to better adapt and respond to changing needs of the organization. With the new focus of the IT component, we were able to successfully develop and implement a new case management system on time and on budget, a longstanding priority for the organization.

The work SSA OIG employees perform is critically important, and my goal was to ensure each member of the team was fulfilled in their work. The mission at SSA OIG is special and

meaningful to every person in the country. Knowing employees are the most valuable asset, I focused on improving engagement and building professional development programs.

We established SSA OIG's first-ever full-time organizational health director position to serve as a liaison between the workforce and leadership. We also established new programs to improve opportunities for professional development for all employees. One such example, the Professional Development Program, includes a panel comprised of senior leaders, who evaluate and approve requests for leadership training organization-wide, thereby permitting more consistency and fairness in how those opportunities are awarded.

Facing numerous challenges and monumental change, SSA OIG employees were highly successful despite receiving only one increase in base funding in FY 2022 after receiving no increase since FY 2016. SSA OIG also received no additional budget to fund its investigations related to pandemic relief programs or government imposter scams. At the same time, SSA received significant increases in its budget. In FY 2024, SSA OIG's budget represents 0.8 percent (less than one percent) in comparison to SSA's budget. Even with these fiscal challenges SSA OIG maintains \$21 in returns to the American people for every \$1 in appropriations.

While there are many more issues I would have liked to address during my tenure as Inspector General, I recognize SSA OIG is on a stronger path because of what we were able to achieve. I am proud of the SSA OIG team. As I retire, I believe I am leaving the organization in a much stronger position to change, innovate, and lead on the important work it performs to serve the American people.

Sincerely,



Gail S. Ennis  
Inspector General

cc: The Honorable Charles Schumer  
The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
The Honorable Mike Johnson  
The Honorable Steve Scalise  
The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
The Honorable Gary Peters  
The Honorable Rand Paul  
The Honorable James Comer  
The Honorable Jamie Raskin  
The Honorable Drew Ferguson  
The Honorable John Larson