

**Crapo Statement at Hearing on SSA FY 2025 Budget**  
*March 20, 2024*

**Washington, D.C.**--U.S. Senate Finance Committee Ranking Member Mike Crapo (R-Idaho) delivered the following remarks at a hearing on the President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Budget Request for the Social Security Administration (SSA) with Commissioner Martin O'Malley.

*As prepared for delivery:*

"Thank you, Senator Wyden, and thank you, Commissioner O'Malley, for appearing before the Committee this afternoon to discuss the President's Fiscal Year 2025 Budget for the Social Security Administration.

"Commissioner O'Malley, during your nomination hearing, you committed to making customer service improvements at the SSA a top priority.

"During today's hearing, I look forward to hearing more about your approach to addressing SSA's ongoing challenges with wait times for the National 800 Number, processing times for disability decisions and improper payments; the data and metrics you are looking at to evaluate your progress; and how the Biden Administration's budget request for the SSA supports these efforts.

"Average wait times for the National 800 Number have ticked down slightly over the last few months, but still remain above 30 minutes. After years of delays, the SSA has successfully transitioned its National 800 Number to a new phone service platform. While the Budget highlights the expected benefits of this new phone system, SSA must do more to ensure that future information technology projects make responsible use of taxpayer dollars by being delivered on time and on budget.

"Americans across the country continue to wait far too long to receive a disability decision from SSA. The President's Budget proposes addressing these wait times through hiring and retaining State Disability Determination Services employees and seeking process efficiencies, including improved technology.

"The Budget also highlights a proposed rule the agency claims would improve its disability adjudication process by reducing the number of years of past relevant work SSA considers when making disability decisions. While SSA's disability rules need revisiting, simplification should not always result in more mandatory spending. SSA should also focus on updating the outdated occupations list used in making disability decisions, to ensure the correct applicants are receiving benefits. SSA has already spent a substantial amount of time and resources on this update and I urge you to stick to your commitment of making this update a high priority.

"During your nomination hearing, senators on both sides of the aisle underscored the need for SSA to do more to reduce improper payments. Last month, SSA took an

important step toward implementing the Payroll Information Exchange provision in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015. Once this new exchange is in place, it is expected to improve payment accuracy and reduce the self-reporting burden on beneficiaries.

“I also understand that SSA has been reviewing its policies and procedures to identify what more can be done to help prevent and address overpayments. I look forward to hearing more about these efforts today. As SSA continues this work, the agency must be careful to address the initial errors, not just waive the mistakes after they have occurred.

“While the President’s Budget includes operational requests for Congress to consider, it fails in addressing Social Security’s long-term solvency. The Social Security program provides benefits to millions of seniors, individuals with disabilities and their families. We must ensure current beneficiaries and future generations will be able to depend on the program and address its financing shortfalls.

“The President’s Budget does not include any legislative proposals to back up his stated commitment to protect and strengthen Social Security. The solutions to preserving it are increasingly difficult as more time is wasted.

“Thank you again for being here today, Commissioner O’Malley, and thank you, Mr. Chairman.”