

**David Black**  
**Nominee for Deputy Commissioner, Social Security Administration**  
**U.S. Senate**  
**Committee on Finance**  
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Chairman Grassley, Ranking Member Wyden, Members of the Committee, thank you for holding this hearing.

Thank you, Senators Hoeven and Cramer, for that kind introduction. Joining me today is my wife, Hollie, who is an officer in the US Air Force and our newborn son, William, who at 10 days old is getting his first civics lesson. Our daughters, Olivia, who is almost 4, and Grace, who is almost 2, are a little older and wiser and chose the playground over dad's testimony.

I am proud to call North Dakota home because my time growing up on a farm there charted the course for my character. While I grumbled at hauling hay bales in the heat or feeding the livestock in the cold, those early experiences taught me priceless life lessons, and I am grateful for them. My parents instilled in me the importance of honesty, hard work, self-reliance, responsibility, and a commitment to selfless service.

This commitment is why I have dedicated most of my career to the military and our civilian government. I have served for almost 29 years in the military as an enlisted soldier and an officer on both active duty and reserve duty including deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. I am currently a Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve.

My eight years as SSA's General Counsel during both the George W. Bush and Barack Obama Administrations educated me not only about the agency, but also about how its policies and practices play out for Americans who depend on us. Given this insight, in 2016 when I was approached about a transition role at the Department of Education where I worked from 2004-2007, I suggested I could be of more help at SSA.

In my 10 years with SSA, I have witnessed how important it is for the agency to manage its programs effectively to serve beneficiaries. My parents raised

twelve children on a limited income, so we worked hard to make ends meet. I benefited from programs including head start, reduced school lunches, summer jobs for low-income youth, Pell grants to attend college, and the GI Bill. My mom relies on widow's benefits as her only source of income. I understand firsthand the importance of government programs for those who qualify. If confirmed, I will never lose sight of the significance of SSA's work.

Being good stewards of SSA programs means getting the right amount to the right person on time. The agency must continue its efforts to eliminate payment error, waste, fraud, and abuse while ensuring that its Social Security programs serve and are accessible to beneficiaries. In some cases, this might mean we need to discuss program simplification, which SSA employees seek and can make SSA's program easier for the public to understand.

The basics of public service must come first: answering calls, reducing wait times in SSA offices, and issuing fair decisions. The agency needs to evaluate all service channels and bring technology to bear when it can improve public service.

The agency must also ensure the privacy and security of the sensitive personal information the American public has entrusted to it. As SSA's former General Counsel, I served as the Senior Agency Official for Privacy. I know the agency takes seriously its responsibility to protect this information, including ensuring that only the internal or external people who need appropriate access to SSA's sensitive information have it. In addition to these longstanding tenets of SSA's disclosure policy, the agency must also stay ahead of persistent cyber security threats.

I have spoken with Andrew Saul, the nominee for Commissioner of Social Security about our priorities. We share the same customer-service focus and commitment to digging into the facts of challenges, with an emphasis on accountability, action, and transparency. Our priorities not only align with each other but also reflect issues of great concern to this Committee and the American public.

I believe in SSA's mission and, if confirmed, I look forward to working with you on these matters. Thank you. I will be happy to answer any questions you have.