

WASHINGTON, DC—Today the Social Security Administration announced that due to significant cuts in its operating budget, starting on August 15th, field offices will begin closing to the public half an hour early. Representative Xavier Becerra (CA-31), Vice Chair of the House Democratic Caucus and Ranking Member on the Subcommittee on Social Security, released the following statement in response:

**“This is just the tip of the iceberg. Instead of going after wasteful spending or the actual causes of the current deficit, House Republicans put Social Security Administration’s operating budget on the chopping block and cut it to the bone. The result: the creeping lockout of our seniors, widows, and disabled workers from receiving the Social Security benefits and services they need and have earned.**

**Social Security has never added a dime to the deficits but that hasn’t stopped House Republicans from slashing Social Security’s budget to pay the bill left due by the Bush tax cuts for multimillionaires and two unpaid for wars. Congress should focus on strengthening Social Security for current beneficiaries and future generations, and stop raiding it in the name of deficit reduction.”**

Background:

The Social Security Administration’s (SSA) appropriation for 2011 (\$11.4 billion) is \$1 billion lower than what SSA needed and requested. Even after SSA drains its reserve fund, the agency will have a lower operating budget for 2011 than it did for 2010.

Due to budget constraints, SSA is under a hiring freeze and has already lost 1,600 employees who were not replaced this year.

SSA has already had to take a number of drastic steps due to the budget cuts:

- It canceled the opening of 8 new hearing offices which would have helped reduce waiting times for disabled applicants who need a hearing before a judge (currently over a year).

- It is closing the National Case Assistance Center (which assisted with processing appeals) this year.
- It has postponed indefinitely the opening of a new teleservice center in Jackson, Tennessee.
- It has stopped mailing out the Social Security statement, which shows workers their projected future benefits and allows them to make sure their earnings are being correctly recorded so that future benefit amounts will be correct.
- It is severely cutting investments in information technology that would improve future productivity.
- It has discontinued over 300 remote service sites, where people who cannot easily get to a regular SSA field office can meet with SSA personnel to file claims and resolve their problems.