



SOCIAL SECURITY

The Commissioner

January 21, 2015

The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Mikulski:

I want to thank you for the support you provided us when we needed to reduce office hours in our local Social Security field offices. As you may recall, in 2011 we reduced office hours because of tight budgets. We further reduced our office hours in 2012 and in 2013 due to continued severe underfunding, growing backlogs, and staffing losses. Thanks to your help, we were able to begin the recovery efforts in fiscal year (FY) 2014.

The funding we received allowed us to replace some of the losses in our field offices and provide overtime support we had lost from previous years. The employees we hired are completing their training and beginning to take on various workloads, including answering our phones. While it will still take a little time for them to reach the productivity levels of seasoned employees, they are making a difference.

Because of your ongoing commitment of resources in FY 15, we can now expand office hours at our local Social Security offices nationwide and restore some service hours to the public. Effective March 16, 2015, Social Security offices nationwide will be open for an additional hour on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. For example, a field office that is usually open to the public Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 9 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. will remain open until 4:00 p.m. While new resources help us restore service, field offices will remain closed to the public at noon every Wednesday so employees can continue to process workloads and reduce backlogs and train newly hired staff.

As you know, most Social Security services do not require a visit to a local field office. The public has various options of conducting business with us. Many services, including applying for retirement, disability, and Medicare benefits are conveniently available anytime at www.socialsecurity.gov. Social Security also offers service via a toll-free number, 1-800-772-1213 (Voice) and 1-800-325-0778 (TTY). Automated attendant services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Representatives are available from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm, Monday thru Friday. This decision will allow those who choose to conduct business face-to-face with an additional hour of service.

With your continued support and commitment, we will be able to build upon the progress we have made. If you have questions or need additional information, please have your staff contact Judy Chesser, Deputy Commissioner for Legislation and Congressional Affairs at (202) 358-6030. Thank you in advance for your kind assistance with this important change.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carolyn".

Carolyn W. Colvin
Acting Commissioner