

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 3, 2012

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown Jr.
Governor
State of California
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Brown:

As Members of the California Congressional Delegation, we are writing to urge you to maintain full work hours for federally-funded employees of California's Department of Social Services Disability Determination Services (SSDDS) and of the Employment Development Department (EDD) so that Californians in need can promptly receive the Social Security or unemployment benefits they have earned.

California's SSDDS employees process Social Security Disability Insurance (DI) applications. One of the provisions in California's recently-enacted budget reduces state deficits by requiring state workers, including those at the SSDDS, to take 12 days of unpaid leave per year. But if SSDDS staff were allowed to work a full schedule, Social Security would pay their salaries and our state would be able to reduce benefit waiting times for disabled Californians, all without increasing our state budget deficit.

Over 16 million Californians contribute to Social Security with every paycheck. In exchange, Social Security provides unique, all-in-one retirement security, life insurance, and disability insurance. Californians rely on the 1,400 skilled employees at the SSDDS to process their benefit applications if they become severely disabled and need Social Security.

We understand that California is facing some very painful choices due to budget challenges that were years in the making. Fortunately, the federal government

pays the full cost of SDDS workers, including both salary and overhead costs. Shorter SDDS workweeks would increase waiting times for disabled California workers and reduce federal reimbursements to the state, but they would not help the state reduce the size of its budget deficit.

Right now, over 120,000 Californians are waiting for decisions on their applications for Social Security disability benefits – benefits they earned through a lifetime of work. California’s disabled workers already wait an average of 20 days longer for decisions on their Social Security applications than workers in other parts of the country, in part because of Governor Schwarzenegger’s decision in 2009 to unilaterally furlough SDDS workers. Additional cuts to SDDS employees’ work hours will make it difficult for us to repair the harm done to disabled workers by Governor Schwarzenegger’s decisions.

Similarly, EDD workers who process unemployment insurance (UI) benefits are fully funded with a federal grant based on workloads. If our state workers work fewer hours, the grant will be reduced. And reduced EDD workdays could also lead to delays for unemployed Californians who need help with their UI applications or are waiting for their UI claims or appeals to be processed.

Additionally, the law requires prompt processing of claims in exchange for the federal money. In the past, the Department of Labor has warned states that if furloughs slow unemployment processing times, they are at risk of losing their federal grants.

In these challenging times, Americans need Social Security and Unemployment Insurance more than ever. We believe it is possible to preserve access to Social Security and unemployment benefits, even in this challenging budget environment.

Sincerely,

Clayton Beane
Member of Congress

Davey Peltier
Member of Congress

Grant F. Nyquist
Member of Congress

Juan A. Davis
Member of Congress

Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

Sara Johnson
Member of Congress

Jim Hahn
Member of Congress

Judy Mikulky
Member of Congress

Loretta Sanchez
Member of Congress

Mike Escher
Member of Congress

Bois O. Matsui
Member of Congress

George Miller
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

Lynn Woolsey
Member of Congress

Jac Baca
Member of Congress

Leelle Poybal-Allard
Member of Congress

James Hahn
Member of Congress

Ally B. Schiff
Member of Congress


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