



News Release

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Security Offers Positions to 144 Administrative Law Judges

New Hires a Key Step in Reducing Agency's Backlog of Disability Cases

Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security, today announced that the agency has begun making offers to 144 of the 175 new Administrative Law Judges (ALJs) it will hire this fiscal year. Due to litigation and budget cuts, the agency has about ten percent fewer ALJs than it did a decade ago. During that same time, the number of cases waiting for a hearing decision has more than doubled.

“The hiring of these new ALJs is a critical step in our plan to reduce the backlog of disability cases,” Commissioner Astrue said. “They represent one of the largest investments in ALJs this agency has ever made. When these ALJs are fully-trained, and combined with the other steps we are taking, we will be able for the first time in this decade to reduce the number of cases waiting for a disability hearing. I can hardly wait for them to start.”

The new ALJs will be brought on board in phases with the first hires reporting for duty in April, when they will begin an intensive orientation and training program. While initially handling a reduced docket, newly hired ALJs should be scheduling a full docket of cases by the end of the year.

“I have been very impressed with the caliber of the candidates eager to take on the challenging role of a Social Security ALJ,” Commissioner Astrue noted. “These new ALJs are top-notch legally and comfortable working in an electronic environment, which is of utmost importance as we strive to increase the efficiency and productivity of our ALJ corps.”

Hiring of additional ALJs is only one component of the plan the agency has put in place to reduce the backlog of disability cases. The agency also continues to make progress in many other areas including opening the National Hearing Center, completing the nationwide roll-out of the Quick Disability Determination process, implementing compassionate allowances and eliminating aged cases. More information about Social Security's plan is available at www.socialsecurity.gov/disability under the heading *What's New*.

“In May of last year, I presented Congress with a detailed plan to reduce the backlog of disability cases,” Commissioner Astrue said. “I am pleased to report that, with the strong support of the President and Members of Congress from both parties, we have been able to move forward with that plan. I urge Congress to continue its support with timely action on the President's fiscal year 2009 budget request for Social Security. A delay in fully funding the President's request will undermine the many positive steps we have taken this year.”

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