

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN BRADY

Regarding H.R. 4547, February 5, 2018

Mr. Speaker, today we have an opportunity to take action on bipartisan legislation to help those receiving Social Security. This bill, led by Congressmen Sam Johnson of Texas and John Larson of Connecticut, the chairman and ranking member of the Ways and Means Social Security Subcommittee, takes actions to improve the representative payee program.

Today, when someone on Social Security is not able to manage their own benefits, the Social Security Administration will assign them what is called a representative payee. These are individuals or organizations that have a vital responsibility to be helping some of our most vulnerable people on Social Security: children, seniors, and folks with disabilities. The payee receives benefits on behalf of these Americans, and they are required to use the money to fulfill those needs.

Here is the problem: The Representative Payee Program just isn't working the way it should. As the Committee on Ways and Means has learned from the work of our Social Security Subcommittee, the Social Security Administration has serious challenges knowing when someone needs help managing their benefits and also in making sure that those who provide that help are doing a good job.

This puts some of our most vulnerable receivers of Social Security at risk, and that is completely unacceptable. We have a responsibility to fix it. That is why this legislation is so important.

With this bipartisan bill, we can make the representative payee program more effective and more accountable for the Americans who depend upon it. This bill strengthens oversight; it increases protections for those on Social Security; it reduces burdens on families; and it puts greater focus on the needs of Social Security families, giving Americans more of a say in selecting the payee of their choice and, more importantly, ensuring they have a payee they can trust.

Although our committee did not mark up this bill, we have held multiple subcommittee hearings on the issue and meetings among Members from both sides of the aisle. We have heard from stakeholders about the challenges they face. This bill is a long time coming and is going to make important, much-needed changes to the representative payee program.

To further solidify the committee's understanding and our legislative intent, I am sending the Acting Commissioner of Social Security a letter signed by myself and Congressmen Richard Neal, Sam Johnson, and John Larson.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the Record this letter which transmits a technical explanation of the bill. We have asked the Acting Commissioner to make that letter and technical explanation available on the agency's website.