



10 G Street NE
Suite 600
Washington DC 20002-4215
202-216-0420
800-966-1935
www.ncpssm.org

** Letters were also sent to Harkin and Obey*

January 7, 2009

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
S-131 Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Inouye:

The National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare strongly urges you to include in the Economic Recovery package sufficient funding to prevent a substantial increase in the Social Security disability backlogs. Without such funds, waiting times will grow for vulnerable disability applicants, and services will deteriorate for other Social Security Administration (SSA) beneficiaries, including the elderly, as current resources are stretched to the breaking point.

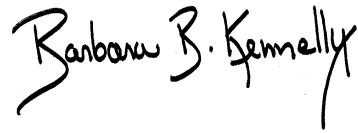
More than a million Americans are already waiting for a decision on their Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability applications. At the hearing level alone, more than 760,000 applicants are waiting for a benefit determination. The average wait on appeal for these vulnerable individuals is over 500 days. While SSA has been working hard to reduce these waiting times, some people are waiting a total of more than three years for benefits.

Unfortunately, as the recession has deepened, applications have grown substantially. Late last fall, the SSA actuaries projected a steep increase in both disability and retirement benefits as a result of the declining economy. They estimated that the cost of processing these increased claims would be \$960 million over the next two years. This would prevent further growth in the backlog of applications and allow people to receive their benefits on time.

With these funds, SSA would create jobs which would have a direct stimulative effect on the economy. Moreover, the resulting expedited payments to the elderly and disabled would have a multiplier effect. According to the Consumer Expenditure Survey, the elderly, on average, spend over 90 percent of their annual income on goods and services. People with disabilities, who are among the poorest people in the country, are also likely to spend their money immediately.

For all these reasons, we respectfully request that you include at least \$960 million dollars in the economic recovery package so that the burden of the recession will not fall disproportionately on this country's disabled and elderly.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara B. Kennelly". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'B' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'y'.

Barbara B. Kennelly
President and CEO