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## **BAUCUS EXAMINES SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION PLAN TO TACKLE DISABILITY BACKLOGS, RISING WORKLOADS, UPGRADE COMPUTER SYSTEMS**

*Finance Chairman calls for added funding to execute SSA plan*

*Washington, DC* – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) commented today on a five-year strategic plan released by the Social Security Administration (SSA) that identified potential future vulnerabilities, including a substantial disability hearings backlog, antiquated computer systems, and rising workloads in SSA's field offices resulting in inadequate customer service. Baucus requested that SSA develop the plan at a May 8 Finance Committee hearing.

**“I’m pleased that Commissioner Astrue has prepared such a comprehensive report detailing several areas of significant concern to Montanans and to all Americans, and detailed and innovative ways to fix them,”** Baucus said. **“Due to huge backlogs, individuals may wait as much as two years to appeal denial of their applications for disability benefits. This is unconscionable. The plan establishes a strategy to eliminate these backlogs by the end of 2013. While I applaud the SSA on their efforts in developing the plan, we can and must get additional funding to clear these backlogs sooner, as well as to improve the telephone service and customer service in Social Security’s field offices.”**

This report gives clear and specific descriptions of Social Security’s antiquated computer system, and the need to modernize the infrastructure for better interaction with systems used by states and other federal agencies, and that can handle the current volume of transactions and the increasing volume expected as the Baby Boom generation retires. The strategic plan also identifies a need for increasing program integrity activities such as continuing disability reviews and SSI redeterminations, to ensure that only those who continue to be eligible receive those benefits.

Baucus continued, **“Social Security’s computer systems and infrastructure were developed in the 1980s, and most of those systems have not been substantially upgraded. If we expect Social Security to serve our constituents fairly, timely, and with expertise and sensitivity, we must adequately fund initiatives to improve those systems. I look forward to working with the Appropriations Committee to provide for all of these funding needs, so that the service requirements for those applying for and receiving retirement, survivor, and disability benefits can be met.”**

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