



News Release

SOCIAL SECURITY

Statement on Second Flawed Report from Syracuse University

Syracuse's latest "analysis" is just more unsupportable grandstanding masquerading as academic research. Federal law gives Administrative Law Judges substantial decisional independence in making their decisions, so variations between judges are a predictable consequence of Congressional decisions.

As with Syracuse's last report on Social Security, this one also is riddled with methodological sloppiness. For instance, without other changes, a 30% increase in judges is going to increase the number of judges who are outliers at both ends of the spectrum, so simply comparing the range does not mean that decisions overall are more variable than in recent years.

Syracuse also continues to compare apples and oranges. For instance, National Hearing Centers (NHC) hear a rapidly changing mix of cases by video – one judge hearing cases from Anchorage while the judge next door is hearing cases from Puerto Rico. Accordingly, it is irresponsible for Syracuse, as it does on page 5, to compare judges in an NHC with judges in a standard hearing office without accounting for the substantial differences in the age and origin of the cases.

We call on Syracuse University to insist that reports of this nature receive thorough peer review to end misleading errors, and to fully disclose the sources of funding for its reports. Academic integrity requires no less.

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