

Medina, who came to America in 1987 after fleeing civil war and communism back home in Nicaragua, received notice earlier this month that her Supplemental Security Income benefits will end in August unless she becomes an American citizen or meets one of five other narrow criteria.

Medina has received SSI checks for three years since breaking her arm and injuring her back while working at a hotel in San Antonio. SSI, which is run by the Social Security Administration, is a federal assistance program for elderly and disabled people with low incomes.

Through an interpreter, Medina said she needs the monthly \$484 SSI check she receives from the government to buy medication for lingering physical and emotional problems she suffered as a result of the accident. She is currently unemployed.

To find out how she may still qualify for disability benefits, Medina and her husband, Luis, met with SSI officials last week at a special office in Wheaton Plaza.

"We want to know what we can do," said Luis Medina.

The Medinas are not alone. Under the Welfare Reform Act signed by President Clinton last year, most legal immigrants are no longer eligible for SSI.

Approximately 4,000 Montgomery County immigrant residents receive SSI checks each month, and they, too, will be getting notification letters soon. About 400 letters are going out each week, and recipients have 90 days to respond and have their eligibility reevaluated.

To meet the anticipated response, officials at the Wheaton Social Security office have leased a former Crestar Bank facility at Wheaton Plaza and staffed it with five new workers to evaluate cases like Medina's.

Rich Fenton, manager of the Wheaton office, said the temporary site currently handles about 25 to 30 people per day. But he expects visits from as many as 50 to 60 people each day as more residents are notified.

"I'm expecting that the volume will increase pretty substantially," Fenton said.

SSA spokesman Tom Margenau said out of 6.5 million SSI recipients nationwide, approximately 900,000 are legal immigrants. Benefit checks will stop flowing to an estimated 500,000 of those, according to federal officials, resulting in government savings of \$9.9 billion through 2002.

The government also will save money by cracking down on SSI fraud, officials said. SSA's Office of the Inspector General closed 833 fraud cases in fiscal 1996, spokesman Dan Devlin said.

States also may save money when immigrants lose their SSI benefits. As non-citizen residents are removed from SSI, Margenau said most also will lose Medicaid benefits, which come from a state program administered through the county Department of Health and Human Services.

Local officials are unsure how many people may be dropped.

"We don't have a good sense yet of what the numbers are," said Corinne Stevens, chief of Montgomery County's Crisis, Income and Victim Services. "So many people, if they're able to, are really moving toward citizenship."

Marta Medina said she would like to be a U.S. citizen, especially since Helane DiGravio, an interpreter and manager of the temporary SSI site in Wheaton, said it doesn't look like Medina will qualify for SSI any other way.

"She's going to apply for citizenship, but she knows it'll take a while," DiGravio said.

Medina, who holds a college degree from a university in Guatemala, has lived in the United States for 10 years, twice as long as needed to become a citizen. Her husband,

who is unemployed but does not receive SSI, has been here since 1989.

Marta Medina said she knows education and work are needed to get ahead in America, and she'd like to take training courses for home health care workers offered by the county's Workforce Development Corp., formerly called the Private Industry Council.

But Medina said that as a result of her emotional problems and injuries from her hotel job, she hasn't felt well enough to enroll in job training or English classes, or to study for the citizenship test.

Some experts argue that the test, which requires knowledge of the English language as well as American government, is not difficult to pass—especially for someone who has been here as long as Medina.

"The language exams are extraordinarily easy," said Robert Rector of the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank based in Washington. "The language exam does not pose much of a barrier, partly because you can take it over and over and over."

Rector was a major congressional adviser during the welfare reform debate in 1996. When the law was finally signed, Clinton was criticized for excluding legal residents from SSI benefits, since many have worked and paid taxes for years just like U.S. citizens.

Some states, including Maryland, are considering picking up the tab for immigrant residents denied SSI. Margenau said there are 9,645 immigrant SSI recipients in Maryland—about half of whom live in Montgomery County—receiving average monthly benefits of \$345.

Gov. Parris N. Glendening has said he wants to continue food and medical support for children of legal immigrants who would otherwise be cut off, Glendening spokesman Ray Feldmann said.

The governor appointed a Task Force on the Loss of SSI Benefits for Legal Immigrants in Maryland, which issued a draft report Feb. 6. Its findings have not yet been made public.

[From the Nogales International, Feb. 21, 1997]

HUNDREDS OF NON-CITIZENS HERE LEGALLY FACE AID LOSS

(By Kathy Vandervoet)

Hundreds of non-citizens living legally in Nogales or other Santa Cruz County communities will lose their supplemental Social Security income this summer under the new federal welfare reform law.

They will no longer be eligible for food stamps, cash welfare, Medicaid and disability.

Roberto Mendez, manager of the Nogales Social Security Administration office, said there are 1,300 individuals receiving the supplemental payments.

Of those, 475 are legal residents, but not citizens of the United States. All are subject to losing their monthly benefits checks in about four months, he said.

"But there aren't going to be that many. There will be exceptions," Mendez said.

It's up to the men and women to visit the office, located at 441 No. Grand Ave., to determine if they fit under the exceptions clause.

The 475 recipients are being notified by a letter, which are being sent out in weekly batches. Some will receive their letter earlier than others, Mendez said.

They then have 90 days to comply if they want to retain their monthly check.

Those who will qualify for continued aid have worked and earned 40 quarters of coverage, Mendez said.

It can be the individual, a parent, a husband, a wife or the combination of a couple's work to arrive at the 40 quarters total, he said.

Mendez said he is urging concerned recipients, some of whom have lived in the United States for 20 or 30 years, to earn their U.S. citizenship.

"I refer a lot of them to the public library for their citizenship program," Mendez said. He's been told it takes about eight months from the time a person applies until he or she meets the citizenship requirements.

As well, the person must have been a permanent U.S. resident for five years. Those married to a citizen can apply after three years.

Mendez said he's heard from worried residents who say they will have to give up their independence and move in with a family member, while others will be left with no choice but to leave Nogales and move to Mexico.

For additional information, call the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213.

TRIBUTE TO SENATOR WENDELL H. FORD OF KENTUCKY

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, with sadness, I rise today to pay tribute to a remarkable Member of this body and a very dear friend, the senior Senator from Kentucky, WENDELL FORD. Senator FORD has announced his retirement after a third of a century in public service, including the last 22 years in the U.S. Senate. When WENDELL FORD leaves the Senate at the end of next year to return to his family and his beloved Kentucky, I will miss his leadership and his friendship tremendously.

For the past 3 years, it has been my pleasure to serve with Senator FORD in the Democratic leadership in my capacity as conference secretary. Since 1990 Senator FORD has served in the leadership as Democratic whip, where he has been an energetic leader and has had a positive impact on the Senate's agenda. During the years I have served with him I have appreciated his good advice and his no-nonsense style. Senator FORD's insights into the issues and problems we address in the Senate, as well as his good word, have made him a valuable and trusted leader. Our leadership, the Senate, and most of all the State of Kentucky have greatly benefited from his service.

Throughout his career in public service, Senator FORD has remained true to his constituents by being a strong advocate for his home State of Kentucky. He knows that a Senator's ultimate responsibility is to the people of his State. As a result of his advocacy and his honesty, Kentucky voters have returned him to Washington three times with landslide election victories.

Senator FORD has also served as an advocate for the Senate. As chairman of the Rules Committee he has helped ensure the smooth operation of the Senate and has been a leader in looking for ways to make the Senate work more efficiently. As a member of the Committees on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, as well as Energy and Natural Resources, Senator FORD has been at the center of many of our most important national debates.

I believe that I speak for all of my colleagues when I say that the departure of Senator FORD will leave a huge

void in this institution. He has been an effective leader, a strong legislator, a fearless defender of his State, and a good friend. As he approaches retirement, I want to thank WENDELL FORD for his service to his country and congratulate him for his extraordinary career. We will truly miss him.

THE 86TH BIRTHDAY OF ARNOLD ARONSON

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I come to the Senate floor to wish Arnie Aronson a happy 86th birthday and to commend him on his many achievements.

Arnie has been working for civil rights for over 50 years. He began at a time when help wanted ads openly specified "Gentile only" or "Irish need not apply." In the early 1940's he organized a coalition of religious, ethnic, civil rights, social welfare, and labor organizations into the Chicago Council Against Religious and Racial Discrimination. By 1950 he was working with Roy Wilkins and many others to organize support for President Truman's proposed civil rights effort and engineered the combination of national organizations that created the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights.

He and the leadership Conference were instrumental in the enactment of the first extensive Federal civil rights laws since Reconstruction, the landmark 1964 Civil Rights Act, the fundamental Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the pivotal Fair Housing Act of 1968. They have been critical to our civil rights efforts at every turn every since.

The statement of purpose he drafted for the Leadership Conference says a great deal about this extraordinary man and his dedication to the rights of all:

We are committed to an integrated, democratic, plural society in which every individual is accorded equal rights, equal opportunities and equal justice and in which every group is accorded an equal opportunity to enter fully into the general life of the society with mutual acceptance and regard for difference.

Arnie went on to help organize clergy, churches, and synagogues. He was a founding member of the National Urban Coalition and a charter member of Common Cause. In the last 10 years, while well in his 70's, he assumed the presidency of the Leadership Conference Education Fund and helped invigorate its educational and public service activities.

While he gave leadership and inspiration to the country he never forgot his family. I know the influence he had on his niece and nephew, Jenette and Si Kahn.

Their lives were changed as were ours. I wish him a happy birthday.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Monday, March 10, the Federal debt stood at \$5,354,330,021,048.50.

One year ago, March 10, 1996, the Federal debt stood at \$5,017,404,000,000.

Five years ago, March 10, 1992, the Federal debt stood at \$3,848,675,000,000.

Ten years ago, March 10, 1987, the Federal debt stood at \$2,249,369,000,000.

Fifteen years ago, March 10, 1982, the Federal debt stood at \$1,048,663,000,000 which reflects a debt increase of more than \$4 trillion, \$4,305,667,021,048.50 during the past 15 years.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Williams, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, which were referred as indicated:

EC-1342. A communication from the Acting Architect of the Capitol, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of all expenditures from April 1 through September 30, 1996; to the Committee on Appropriations.

EC-1343. A communication from the Administrator of the Food and Consumer Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule relative to Child Nutrition Programs, (RIN0584-AC15) received on March 10, 1997; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-1344. A communication from the Acting Executive Director of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule relative to approval of applications, received on March 10, 1997; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-1345. A communication from the Acting Executive Director of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule relative to financial reports, received on March 10, 1997; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-1346. A communication from the Acting Executive Director of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule relative to contract market review, received on March 10, 1997; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-1347. A communication from the Congressional Review Coordinator of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule relative to brucellosis in cattle, received on March 6, 1997; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-1348. A communication from the Congressional Review Coordinator of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Depart-

ment of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule relative to quarantine regulations, received on March 7, 1997; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-1349. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, the 1996 annual report under the Freedom of Information Act; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-1350. A communication from the Director of Fiscal Services, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report under the Freedom of Information Act for calendar year 1996; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-1351. A communication from the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report under the Freedom of Information Act for calendar year 1996; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-1352. A communication from the Assistant Secretary of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report under the Freedom of Information Act for calendar year 1996; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-1353. A communication from the President and Chairman of the Export-Import Bank, transmitting, pursuant to law, the 1996 annual report of the Bank under the Freedom of Information Act; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-1354. A communication from the President and Chairman of the Export-Import Bank, transmitting, pursuant to law, the 1995 annual report of the Bank under the Freedom of Information Act; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-1355. A communication from the General Counsel of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report under the Freedom of Information Act for calendar year 1996; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-1356. A communication from the Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report under the Freedom of Information Act for calendar year 1996; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-1357. A communication from the General Counsel of the National Science Foundation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report under the Freedom of Information Act for calendar year 1996; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-1358. A communication from the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report under the Freedom of Information Act for calendar year 1996; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-1359. A communication from the Administrator of the Small Business Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report under the Freedom of Information Act for calendar year 1996; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-1360. A communication from the Acting Executive Director of the Thrift Depositor Protection Oversight Board, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report under the Freedom of Information Act for calendar year 1996; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-1361. A communication from the Secretary of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, the notice concerning a retirement; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-1362. A communication from the Acting General Counsel of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, a rule entitled "National Flood Insurance Program" (RIN3067-AC54) received on March 6, 1997; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-1363. A communication from the Acting Secretary of Labor, transmitting, pursuant