

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COATS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

WASTEFUL SPENDING

Mr. COATS. Madam President, this is week 14 of “Waste of the Week.” I have been coming to the floor for 14 weeks while the Senate has been in session this year to talk about yet another waste which, if we can correct, can save the taxpayers a lot of money. In this case, we are talking about several billion dollars that have been determined by the inspector general of the Social Security Administration to have been spent improperly, accidentally—by whatever reason—money that belongs to the taxpayers and falls under the category of waste.

It is waste, and I give this inspector general and his staff great credit for doing something very creative and interesting. Actually, this is their job, delving into how an agency handles its business and, more importantly, how it handles the taxpayers’ money. Whether you are looking at big business or big government, you find examples of cost cutting that can save the company and, in this case, save the taxpayer, a very significant amount of money.

The inspector general decided to take a random sample of over 1,500 beneficiaries of the Social Security disability fund, and 44.5 percent of them received an overpayment at some point during the 10-year period that he studied. And based on this sample, the Social Security inspector general estimated that overpayments totaled about \$16.8 billion over a period of time from October 2003 to February 2014, covering nearly 4 million beneficiaries. Now, that is a lot of people, but in this digital age, there are ways in which we can ensure that correct payments are made to the right people and that we don’t end up overspending money that comes from hard-earned taxpayer dollars.

Now, there is some good news to this story because the Social Security Administration, following up on this study, determined to go through its records and try to recover some of this money that had been overpaid. They were successful in recovering nearly half of the \$16.8 billion. They recovered \$8.1 billion of overpayments during this period of time, and I commend them for their effort in doing that. But while we celebrate the good news, we also need to dig in and determine how we make sure this doesn’t continue.

There is another \$8.7 billion out there that needs to be recovered and, of course, the goal is to not only recover that money, if possible, but also to keep this from continuing in out-years. So let us put the steps in place that will give us the ability to stop this from happening going forward.

Now, let me go back and give a little background, the history of how this all came about and how this happened. Of those who improperly received benefits, the circumstances break down like this: Nearly 40 percent—actually 37.9 percent—of the overpayments happened when individuals started working and made enough money by law to support themselves and, therefore, no longer qualified for Social Security disability benefits. Another 23 percent had their medical condition improved to the point where they could go back to work.

Now, interestingly enough, I believe it was my very first “Waste of the Week” that I pointed out that a very significant number of individuals were receiving payments both from Social Security disability and unemployment insurance. To receive unemployment insurance, you have to prove you cannot work or you have been thrown out of work and can’t get back. To receive Social Security disability payments, you have to prove you no longer are able to work and get back. Yet these people were receiving payments from both of those sources.

That was the very first “Waste of the week,” and we put up a chart indicating that we are hoping to reach our goal of \$100 billion of waste, fraud, and abuse, to show the example of money being sent to Washington. Some say: We can’t cut a penny from any program. Well, every business that has gone through this great recession—now going on for the sixth year or so—has had to make sacrifices and they have had to cut costs. Families have had to cut costs. Businesses have had to cut costs. Only the Federal Government says we can’t cut a penny; every program we have is valuable and has to be saved and, in fact, needs more money to be efficient.

So let’s start with those issues that have been determined, through inspections by independent agencies, and proven to have fraud and waste and see if we can add this up. As you can see, this gauge is growing every week.

Returning to the breakdown of those who improperly received benefits: Another 8.6 percent had multiple reasons they were no longer eligible for the benefit, 7.5 percent were imprisoned and had fugitive status, which means they were no longer qualified for the disability benefits, but 7.2 percent of those people continued to receive checks after they had died. So you not only have people in prison and therefore no longer eligible, but 7.2 percent of the people receiving benefits received those after they died, and that totaled up to a very significant amount of money.

Again, we certainly have the technology and the capability to run the death records through the system to make sure checks are not continuing to be sent out to the last home address or whatever to deceased individuals and then taken in and cashed perhaps by family or who knows who.

There were 3.4 percent who weren’t entitled to benefits in the first place. It should be pretty easy to scratch those names and save some money. There were 1.8 percent who had their payment improperly computed—in other words, overpayment, a mistake made by the Social Security Administration—1.8 percent had financial resources exceeding the limit which they were supposed to get, 1.7 percent had a change in their living arrangements—they moved abroad and no longer were eligible—and 5 percent fell under another category of reasons.

The bottom line is an inspection was made, a study was conducted to see how this came about, and we now have the information that money was returned through legal process, but there is still \$8.7 billion out there we didn’t get back. So we want to make sure measures are now put in place so this doesn’t continue. We certainly don’t want some Senator on the floor 5 years or 10 years from now saying: Let me tell you about the latest study of the Social Security inspector general, and when the former Senator from Indiana came to the floor he announced there was \$8.7 billion still out there and that we ought to make changes in the system so it wouldn’t happen again. But guess what. It didn’t get done, and now here I am back at it.

So let’s do this now. Let’s make these changes now so the American people understand we are here not to extort them from the kind of overpayment that is taking place and using their taxpayer dollars to achieve that goal. We can fix this problem, but it is going to take some work.

We need better cross-referencing for beneficiaries with other government lists or private lists to help identify earned wages or other assets. We need information sharing that can save billions and make a significant financial debt into these unfortunate overpayments.

Assuming the trend of the IG report continues, this change can be made, and the missing \$8.7 billion in overpayments can be recovered by the Social Security Administration in future payments. We haven’t calculated what potentially we could save in out-years because, hopefully, we will be able to put measures in place, now that we have this information, that will stop these overpayments from being made. But we do know there is \$8.7 billion out there of money that can be recovered.

So we are adding today a big chunk of money, bringing us up nearly to three-quarters of our goal of reaching \$100 billion in savings from waste, fraud, and abuse. We are only into week 14, and we have several more weeks and months ahead of us. I am hoping we are going to have to put an extension onto this chart. We will see how high it goes. Because our goal is to save the taxpayer dollars that the Federal Government has been proven to waste through waste, fraud, and abuse.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. ERNST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COATS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF MATTHEW T. MCGUIRE TO BE UNITED STATES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT

NOMINATION OF GENTRY O. SMITH, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, TO BE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF FOREIGN MISSIONS, AND TO HAVE THE RANK OF AMBASSADOR DURING HIS TENURE OF SERVICE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations en bloc, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of Matthew T. McGuire, of the District of Columbia, to be United States Executive Director of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development for a term of two years; and Gentry O. Smith, of North Carolina, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Director of the Office of Foreign Missions, and to have the rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 30 minutes of debate, equally divided in the usual form.

Mrs. ERNST. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, shortly our colleagues will have an opportunity to vote on two nominations that are being recommended by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I see that Senator CORKER is on the floor, and I thank him for his help in bringing these two confirmations to the floor of the Senate. Both of these individuals are well qualified, and I urge our colleagues to support both nominations.

One is the nomination of Matthew McGuire to be United States Director of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The other is the nomination of Gentry Smith to be Director of the Office of Foreign Missions.

Mr. McGuire is the Assistant to the Secretary and Director of the Office of Business Liaison at the Department of Commerce, where he leads engagement with the business community, works to strengthen the international economic position of the United States, and advocates for U.S. trade and investment. Prior to joining the U.S. Government, Mr. McGuire worked as a senior executive in the financial services industry for more than 8 years, but he also has been active with nonprofit and civic organizations throughout his career, working on a range of public policy issues across the country and around the world.

In a world where global health, environmental resources, and security challenges far outstrip any one country's ability to respond, it is in our clear interest to have strong U.S. leadership in the World Bank—the foremost international organization promoting economic development, poverty alleviation, and good governance around the world.

Prominent Members of the House of Representatives emphasized this critical role of the World Bank in their May 15 letter supporting Mr. McGuire's nomination. Representatives MEEKS, CLAY, MURPHY, SEWELL, MENG, RANGEL, and others stated that Mr. McGuire's senior executive experience in the financial services industry and leadership roles with nonprofit and civic organizations working on public policy issues around the world "make him distinctly qualified for this position." Mr. McGuire's highly relevant experience in his current position at the Department of Commerce, added to his extensive background working in both for-profit and nonprofit sectors, make him an excellent choice to represent the United States at this institution that is so crucial for global stability. I am confident he will serve with distinction.

Gentry O. Smith is currently a Senior Advisor at the Bureau of Diplomatic Security. The Office of Foreign Missions assists and regulates services for foreign missions in the United States, negotiates with foreign diplomatic representatives to improve operating conditions for U.S. diplomatic missions and personnel abroad, ensures that U.S. diplomatic missions abroad receive equivalent treatment with respect to benefits, privileges, and immunities accorded by the host countries, and, as necessary, adjusts the benefits accorded to foreign missions in the United States on the basis of the principle of reciprocity.

Mr. Smith has an exemplary record of serving his country for well over a quarter of a century, starting with his service as a Raleigh police officer. Mr.

Smith's thorough and highly relevant experience as a Regional Security Officer for American Embassies in Egypt, Japan, and Burma, and his employment with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security as Director of Physical Security Programs, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Countermeasures, and Senior Advisor gives him the expertise and fortitude to head the agency responsible for both improving the operating conditions for U.S. diplomatic missions and for adjusting the benefits accorded to foreign missions if our missions abroad face mistreatment.

Mr. Smith is a proven leader with extensive management experience and skills, and I am confident he will be an excellent Director of the Office of Foreign Missions.

Let me also point out that I know our committee has been very, very busy. We have been able to successfully steer towards enactment the bill for congressional review of the Iranian nuclear agreement. We recently were able to report out in a 19-to-0 vote State Department authorization. I must say that not a day goes by that our committee is not doing some work on behalf of the Senate and the American people.

But I need to point out that we need to pay more attention to getting the President's nominees to the floor with recommendations from our committee. If we complete these two nominations tonight—and I assume that we will—I believe that will make four nominees on which we have completed our work in confirmation that the President has sent to us. There are nine other recommendations, five of which are career officers, that have been reported out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and have yet to be brought to the floor. Five of those nine are career people, and yet we have had no action on the floor of the Senate. Of more concern, there are 35 nominees currently pending before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Of these 35, only 4 have had hearings, and 22 of the 35 are career diplomats.

I understand we have had an extremely busy schedule within the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Senator CORKER and I have talked about this, and I know we will use our best efforts to get these nominations moving forward. I just really wanted to report that because I think we need to work—not only our committee but the leadership of the Senate—to make sure the President's nominees are timely considered and are timely brought forward to the full Senate. I know Senator CORKER has been a true advocate of that process and certainly worked very well in the last Congress to make sure our committee acted in a timely way. I look forward to working with Senator CORKER in this Congress to advance those nominees.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I rise in support of these two nominations. I appreciate the distinguished ranking