

issue, finding that the IRS was rehiring former employees with significant conduct or performance issues.

So what types of conduct are we talking about here? We are talking about IRS employees who threatened their coworkers, didn't pay their own taxes, were excessively absent, falsified employment forms, or were so deficient in their jobs that the IRS had no choice but to terminate their employment. There were also instances where employees accessed sensitive taxpayer information without authorization to do so. I think we can all agree that those are not the types of people that the IRS should be seeking to rehire.

While Congress has repeatedly sought to signal to the IRS its concern on this issue through legislation such as the IRS Restructuring and Reform Act of 1998, and the IRS Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016, the IRS continues to struggle.

TIGTA's most recent findings suggest that further congressional action is needed. As a result, we have before us today a bill which will seek to guarantee that this practice does not continue. It also ensures greater integrity within the IRS's workforce, something that I think all Members of Congress can easily support.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. NEAL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, today's debate reminds me of the words of Will Rogers who used to say that: "The only difference between death and taxes is that death doesn't get worse every time Congress meets."

Although I concede that he had a point during most of the past year, hopefully, today will be an exception to the Rogers rule. That is because we are taking up H.R. 3500, a good bill that would prevent the IRS from rehiring employees who have previously been terminated due to poor conduct or performance.

I want to say at the outset that I know most, if not overwhelmingly all, IRS employees tend to be ethical and diligent public servants who have, in recent years, been asked to do much more with much less. That is exactly what the American people deserve and expect from them and we all appreciate those efforts.

The IRS employees collecting our Nation's revenue enable the Federal Government to support veterans benefits, pave roads, protect the environment, fund medical research, care for needy children, and meet all of the other needs our Federal Government asks. This is an enormous task, and we need intelligent men and women of integrity in those roles who will administer our Tax Code in a fair, even-handed, reasonable, and ethical manner. Most IRS employees meet this standard with the utmost attention to their professional responsibilities and we honor their contributions to the country.

When we learn of situations that fall short of those high standards or employees who have conducted themselves dishonorably, though, it is critically important to rectify the situation swiftly. Jobs at the IRS are positions of great public trust, and last year the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration alerted us to a practice of hiring individuals who had previously violated that trust.

During 15 months covering parts of 2015 and 2016, TIGTA found that the IRS hired almost 7,500 people, including 2,000 rehires. About 10 percent of the rehired employees, who were mostly seasonal workers, had been terminated or separated while under investigation for substantiated conduct or performance issues. Four of the more than 200 rehired employees failed to file their own tax returns. Four were under investigation for unauthorized access to taxpayer information. Twenty-seven failed to disclose a prior termination or conviction on their applications, as required.

Although these hires represent but a fraction of IRS employees overall, it is important that we rectify the situation swiftly and prevent this from happening in the future.

So I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 3500, and at the same time remind them that the outliers we are addressing today should not diminish our respect for the men and women at the IRS who serve the public with, I think, dignity every single day.

Mr. Speaker, let me thank those Internal Revenue Service employees for their hard work.

Mr. Speaker, I urge our colleagues on both sides to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JENKINS of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

In closing, I would like to point out that this legislation has enjoyed wide bipartisan support in the past, and for good reason. It is a commonsense bill that will help build trust with the IRS and integrity within our tax system.

I want to, again, thank my colleague from South Dakota, Representative KRISTI NOEM, for being a leader on this issue and for sponsoring this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support H.R. 3500, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Kansas (Ms. JENKINS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3500, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

IMPROVING SOCIAL SECURITY'S SERVICE TO VICTIMS OF IDENTITY THEFT ACT

Mr. BISHOP of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and

pass the bill (H.R. 6084) to amend title VII of the Social Security Act to provide for a single point of contact at the Social Security Administration for individuals who are victims of identity theft, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6084

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Improving Social Security's Service to Victims of Identity Theft Act".

SEC. 2. SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT FOR IDENTITY THEFT VICTIMS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Title VII of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 901 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"SECTION 714. SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT FOR IDENTITY THEFT VICTIMS.

"(a) IN GENERAL.—The Commissioner of Social Security shall establish and implement procedures to ensure that any individual whose social security account number has been misused (such as to fraudulently obtain benefits under title II, VIII, or XVI of this Act, in a manner that affects an individual's records at the Social Security Administration, or in a manner that prompts the individual to request a new social security account number) has a single point of contact at the Social Security Administration throughout the resolution of the individual's case. The single point of contact shall track the individual's case to completion and coordinate with other units to resolve issues as quickly as possible.

"(b) SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of subsection (a), the single point of contact shall consist of a team or subset of specially trained employees who—

"(A) have the ability to coordinate with other units to resolve the issues involved in the individual's case, and

"(B) shall be accountable for the case until its resolution.

"(2) TEAM OR SUBSET.—The employees included within the team or subset described in paragraph (1) may change as required to meet the needs of the Social Security Administration, provided that procedures have been established to—

"(A) ensure continuity of records and case history, and

"(B) notify the individual when appropriate."

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BISHOP) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. NEAL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BISHOP of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on H.R. 6084, currently under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

Mr. BISHOP of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be here today and pleased that we are considering this bipartisan legislation that I introduced with a friend of mine from Connecticut, Ranking Member LARSON, H.R. 6084, the Improving Social Security's Service to Victims of Identity Theft Act.

This is an issue that is important to all of us in all of our districts. As you well know, Mr. Speaker, identity theft is a crime that is growing at very alarming rates around the country. Supporting victims of identity theft is something I have long championed. As a former local prosecutor and advocate for victims, I gained a real understanding of the plight of many Americans and what they face in recovering from identity theft and from other forms of exploitation.

In response, I spent a large part of my legislative career working on victim's rights and ensuring justice. I am pleased that we are considering H.R. 6084 today.

Mr. Speaker, Americans who are victims of identity theft often face an uphill battle when they contact the Social Security Administration for help. All too often, these individuals find themselves being bounced around in phone trees from recording to recording, person to person, only to start all over again with each new person with whom they speak.

In many cases, an individual will speak to multiple people at the Social Security Administration by phone, only then to be told that they need to go to a field office to resolve the situation.

Mr. Speaker, I just think that is wrong. These are victims of identity theft who urgently need assistance from the Social Security Administration so that they can get their lives back on track. But too many of these victims are being revictimized by the Social Security Administration's cumbersome and disorganized system. It is high time that the Social Security Administration improves its customer service to victims of identity theft.

That is why I introduced H.R. 6084, the bipartisan legislation which will require the Social Security Administration to provide a single point of contact at the agency to an individual who needs to resolve a problem with the Social Security Administration because of the misuse of his or her Social Security number.

This important bill will help Americans get the assistance they need from the Social Security Administration by implementing a customer-focused process. I am pleased to have the support of AARP, the National Council of Social Security Management Associations, and the Association of Mature American Citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD statements of support for my bill from those groups.

AARP,

Washington, DC, June 21, 2018.

Hon. KEVIN BRADY,
Chairman, House Committee on Ways and Means, Washington, DC.

Hon. RICHARD NEAL,
Ranking Member, House Committee on Ways and Means, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN BRADY AND RANKING MEMBER NEAL: On behalf of AARP's 38 million members, we are writing in support of the H.R. 6084, the Improving Social Security's Service to Victims of Identity Theft Act of 2018. The bill directs the Social Security Administration (SSA) to provide a single point of contact and a team of SSA staff to help redress any problems faced by Social Security ID theft victims. AARP is strongly committed to protecting consumers from identity theft and supports your efforts to improve the assistance offered to individuals whose Social Security number has been compromised.

An individual's Social Security number is critical financial information and integral to everyone's personal identity. The range of fraud that can be committed when an individual's Social Security number has been compromised is truly staggering, and the time and effort required to reassert one's financial identity can be daunting. Streamlining and simplifying the assistance that the SSA offers an identity theft victim will be welcomed by individuals who are caught in an often overwhelming situation.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to promote the integrity of the Social Security program, and to protect the identities of American workers and their families.

Sincerely,

JOYCE A. ROGERS,
Senior Vice President,
Government Affairs.

AMAC,
June 18, 2018.

Hon. MIKE BISHOP,
8th Congressional District, Michigan, Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN BISHOP: On behalf of the 1.3 million members of AMAC, the Association of Mature American Citizens, I am writing in support of H.R. 6084, the Improving Social Security's Service to Victims of Identity Theft Act. This important piece of legislation will make it easier for seniors to track the status of their identity theft claims at the Social Security Administration (SSA). By establishing a single point of contact for an identity theft case, H.R. 6084 is a smart, senior-focused solution to a growing problem.

Every year, millions of Americans, and particularly seniors, fall victim to identity theft. While being victimized is bad enough, the process of restoring financial security and recovering peace of mind can be a long, arduous, and convoluted process. For seniors, these problems are particularly acute as they primarily work with SSA—one of the nation's largest federal bureaucracies—to restore their financial security.

H.R. 6084 seeks to improve customer service to identity theft victims in a way that is both smart and practical. Under this proposal, when an identity theft victim requests a new Social Security number, they will be assigned a single point of contact at SSA to manage their case until it is resolved. For seniors, this will prove invaluable as they will no longer have to navigate SSA's massive federal structure to resolve their identity theft case. Seniors can have a singular, reliable, and approachable case manager who can answer their questions, monitor the status of their claim, and help seniors in need of assistance.

As an organization committed to representing mature Americans and seniors, AMAC is dedicated to ensuring senior citizens' interests are protected. We applaud Congressman Bishop for his practical and timely solution to help identity theft victims in their most vulnerable time. AMAC is pleased to offer our organization's full support to the Improving Social Security's Service to Victims of Identity Theft Act.

Sincerely,

DAN WEBER,
President and Founder of AMAC.

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SECURITY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATIONS, INC.,

Arlington, VA, July 16, 2018.

Hon. MIKE BISHOP,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

Hon. SAM JOHNSON,
Chairman, House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Social Security, Washington, DC.

Hon. JOHN B. LARSON,
Ranking Member, House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Social Security, Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN BISHOP, CHAIRMAN JOHNSON AND RANKING MEMBER LARSON: On behalf of the National Council of Social Security Management Associations (NCSSMA) and our members throughout the nation, I would like to thank you for your introduction and original cosponsorship of H.R. 6084, the Improving Social Security's Service to Victims of Identity Theft Act. We very much appreciate your leadership on this important legislation to ensure a measure that will not only benefit and protect the American public, but also ease the administrative burden on the hardworking employees of the Social Security Administration (SSA) by establishing a single point of contact for an identity theft case. H.R. 6084 is a commonsense solution to a growing problem.

NCSSMA is pleased to support H.R. 6084 as it reinforces NCSSMA's own efforts and initiatives to provide the best service to the American people, through the effective and efficient administration of SSA's programs. Millions of Americans fall victim to identity theft every year. We believe this legislation will help identity theft victims work with a single point of contact at SSA to assist in resolving their identity theft case.

As an organization that is committed to improving management and program administration in SSA while advocating for an agency that remains customer focused with an emphasis on excellent public service, we commend you for your practical and timely solution to help identity theft victims. NCSSMA is pleased to offer our organization's support to the Improving Social Security's Service to Victims of Identity Theft Act.

Thank you again for your leadership. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or if we can provide additional assistance.

Sincerely,

CHRISTOPHER DETZLER,
NCSSMA President.

Mr. BISHOP of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. NEAL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 6084, which will provide needed assistance to victims of identity theft. The Committee on Ways and Means has been engaged for some time on the issue of identity theft. In particular, we are stewards of the Social Security

number which is a target for identity thieves because it is the key to unlocking a stolen identity.

Identity theft is a growing problem and online hacking has led to major security breaches in both government, and extensively in the private sector. Americans of all ages, even children, are vulnerable to having their identity stolen. This can wreak havoc in people's lives.

One thing we can do, which we are doing today, is to make sure that individuals can get the assistance they need from the Social Security Administration, SSA, when identity theft has caused problems with their benefits, or if their number has been severely compromised.

For example, fraudsters have been able to steal a Social Security number and use it to file a fraudulent benefit application or to file a false tax return and claim a refund. For some individuals, the theft of their identity creates such damage that they are forced to request a new Social Security number.

Right now, identity theft victims trying to resolve an issue related to the misuse of their Social Security numbers may have to contact SSA multiple times, speaking to several different people, before the issue can be fully resolved.

This legislation provides individuals with a single point of contact in the Social Security Administration that will be responsible for resolving all Social Security-related issues in connection with a theft. This unit will be accountable to identity theft victims until completion, and will track the individual's case and coordinate with other units to resolve all of these issues as quickly as possible.

I certainly support this legislation, which was reported out of the Ways and Means Committee by a unanimous vote. I urge support for H.R. 6084, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BISHOP of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON), one of the great leaders of this body.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my good friends, Representative BISHOP, and Ranking Member LARSON, for their work on this commonsense bill.

I have heard firsthand how hard it can be for victims of identity theft to work with the Social Security Administration.

□ 1530

Recently, a man told me about his experience of someone trying to claim his benefit. First, he got a letter from Social Security telling him to call them about his claim. He hadn't made a claim, so he called Social Security at the number they gave him, and he never heard back. Later, when he tried to file a claim of his own, he ended up having to make four separate calls. Then, Social Security told him they couldn't help him over the phone. Because of the fraudulent claim, they

said he had to go to a field office. As a result of all this hassling, he decided to just put off filing his claim.

If this bill had been in place, he would have had someone in Social Security to help him. Instead, he got the runaround. Having a single point of contact at Social Security for victims of identity theft just makes sense.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. NEAL. Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to close, and I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the sponsors for their hard work, and I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BISHOP of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, as today's debate on this legislation has shown, victims of identity theft in this country are facing an uphill battle in getting assistance from the Social Security Administration. Simply put, the current disconnected structure at the Social Security Administration isn't working for the American people. In response, my bill would require the Social Security Administration to assign a single point of contact at the agency to those who need to solve a problem with the Social Security Administration because of the misuse of his or her Social Security number.

This simply put but important reform will bring an added level of comfort to victims of identity theft and will ensure that they are receiving the quality care that they deserve.

In closing, I thank Ranking Member LARSON for assisting in this bill and joining me in offering the bill. I also thank Chairman BRADY, Ranking Member NEAL, and my fellow Ways and Means members for their support.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join me in supporting this important bipartisan legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BISHOP) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6084, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

IMPROVING SENIORS ACCESS TO QUALITY BENEFITS ACT

Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4952) to direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to conduct a study and submit a report on the effects of the inclusion of quality increases in the determination of blended benchmark amounts

under part C of the Medicare program, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4952

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Improving Seniors Access to Quality Benefits Act".

SEC. 2. DETERMINATION OF BLENDED BENCHMARK AMOUNT STUDY.

(a) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that the inclusion of quality increases in the determination of blended benchmark amounts under section 1853(n)(4) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395w-23(n)(4)) undermines the goal of delivering high-quality care under the Medicare program under title XVIII of such Act.

(b) STUDY AND REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of enactment of this section, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, shall conduct a study and submit to Congress a report on the effects of the inclusion of quality percentage increases under section 1853(n)(5) of such Act in the determination of blended benchmark amounts under section 1853(n)(4) of such Act. Such study and report shall include an analysis of the following:

(1) The authority of the Secretary to remove such increases from the determination of such amounts.

(2) The effects of including such increases in the determination of such amounts on Medicare Advantage organizations (including the effects on any contracts entered into by such organizations).

(3) The financial impact of including such increases in the determination of such amounts by county.

(4) The effects of including such increases in the determination of such amounts on individuals enrolled in a plan under part C of title XVIII of such Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. KELLY) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. NEAL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 4952, currently under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this bill, H.R. 4952, the Improving Seniors Access to Quality Benefits Act, will allow us to take a deeper look at how the Medicare Advantage benchmark cap is affecting people across the Nation. I have been working with Mr. KIND and other Members to address this inequity that affects seniors in high-quality plans across the country.

The Medicare Advantage program was designed to give seniors a choice in their healthcare and utilize the private