

# EDUCATION, WORKFORCE, AND INCOME SECURITY

*An educated citizenry and a productive workforce are keys to the continued vitality of our democratic society and the vigor of our community. To this end, the government spends billions on programs aimed at fostering the development and education of our children and protecting this vulnerable population. Billions of dollars are also directed at providing training for our workers, helping adults not in the workforce (including those on welfare, the unemployed, and the disabled) enhance their skills and obtain employment, and protecting workers from employment related and physical hazards. Significant resources are also devoted to providing Social Security and pension benefits to the nation's retirees. Together, these programs account for over 40 percent of federal spending and touch the lives of virtually every American. Education, Workforce, and Income Security assists Congress by examining whether these programs are being efficiently and effectively implemented.*

## Our Work

The work of our team includes oversight of related programs within the following federal departments and agencies: Department of Agriculture (food and nutrition programs), Department of Education, Department of Health and Human Services (nonhealth programs), Department of Labor, Social Security Administration, and Department of Veterans Affairs (nonhealth programs). Our staff are located in Washington, D.C., and in several fields offices across the country, including Boston, Seattle, and San Francisco.

We analyze the efficiency and effectiveness of programs designed to

- ensure that the nation's children are well-educated, cared for, and raised in safe, stable homes;
- foster a well-educated, skilled workforce and improve workplace protections for employees without excessively burdening employers; and
- maintain adequate retirement benefits for current and future retirees.

### KEY CONTACTS

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## *Accomplishments and Key Projects*

Examples of our recent accomplishments include

- influencing legislation to reduce the funding gaps between poor and wealthy school districts and to better fund high poverty school districts;
- improving the accountability for the performance of disadvantaged students in our public schools;
- simplifying food stamp benefit rules through new legislation;
- assessing key elements of the 1996 welfare reform act to aid Congress as it makes critical decisions about maintaining or revising federal reforms;
- influencing legislation to improve the conditions for working children;
- increasing the emphasis placed on the need for electronic data sharing between the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the states;
- preventing or reducing Supplemental Security Income overpayments;
- pointing out weaknesses in legal protections for employee pensions;
- highlighting the extent to which employer stock investments increase risk in employee pension plans; and
- evaluating various approaches to address the Social Security program's projected insolvency.

Currently, we are working to

- ensure that children are provided healthy meals in school;
- determine how best to place a highly qualified teacher in every classroom;
- examine federal higher education policy and participation in distance education programs;
- identify the challenges in recruiting, developing, and retaining child welfare workers;
- assess services to help low-income families avoid welfare dependence and move out of poverty;
- determine whether potential hazards are identified and addressed by mine employers;
- analyze the differences between male and female earnings;
- examine international policies on older workers;
- evaluate the implications of a voluntary approach to individual investment accounts in Social Security;
- analyze the value of Social Security benefits to different racial minorities; and
- determine SSA's role in helping identify and locate identity thieves and other criminals.