U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

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Acting Comptroller General
of the United States

Accessible Version

June 23, 2026

Frank Bisignano
Commissioner
Social Security Administration
6401 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21235

Priority Open Recommendations: Social Security Administration

Dear Commissioner Bisignano:

The purpose of this letter is to call your personal attention to three areas where open recommendations to the Social Security Administration (SSA) should be given high priority.

In January 2026, we reported that, on a government-wide basis, 77 percent of our recommendations made 5 years ago were implemented.[1] SSA's recommendation implementation rate was 100 percent. As of June 2026, SSA has 48 open recommendations, including 4 priority recommendations.[2] Since our May 2025 letter, SSA has not implemented any priority recommendations.[3] Fully implementing these open priority recommendations could significantly improve SSA's operations.

We are highlighting the following areas that warrant your timely and focused attention:

[1]GAO, *Performance and Accountability Report, Fiscal Year 2025*, GAO-26-900644 (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 29, 2026).

[2]GAO considers a recommendation to be a priority if when implemented, it may significantly improve government operations, for example, by realizing large dollar savings; eliminating mismanagement, fraud, and abuse; or making progress toward addressing a high-risk or duplication issue.

[3]GAO, *Priority Open Recommendations: Social Security Administration*, GAO-25-108005 (Washington, D.C.: May 22, 2025). In this letter, we identified 3 priority recommendations. Since then, we added one new priority recommendation.

- **Preventing potential overpayments.** SSA should take steps to find a cost-effective way to address potential overpayments in the Disability Insurance (DI) program, the nation's largest cash assistance program for individuals with disabilities, as we recommended. SSA's current method of identifying DI beneficiaries who receive Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) benefits is for those beneficiaries to self-report their FECA benefits. SSA determined that establishing a data exchange with the Department of Labor for FECA program data would be a cost-effective approach to identifying DI beneficiaries who also receive FECA benefits. Implementing this data exchange could provide the data needed to better offset or reduce DI benefits when an individual is concurrently receiving FECA benefits. This would better position SSA to strengthen internal controls to prevent potential overpayments.
- **Making service delivery more efficient.** SSA should take steps to improve access to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. As SSA has expanded remote service delivery, it has launched new initiatives to reach certain vulnerable populations. However, not all claimants are able to apply online. In December 2024, an online application for SSI became available for some adults who meet certain criteria. However, SSA does not have a plan with clear steps, goals, metrics, and timelines to help all claimants apply for SSI benefits online, as we recommended. SSA could reduce the need for staff assistance if individuals can apply independently online and help ensure all claimants can apply for benefits.
- **Managing information technology investments cost-effectively.** Each year, the federal government spends more than $100 billion on information technology (IT) and cyber-related investments. For example, federal agencies, such as SSA, buy thousands of software licenses annually. However, agencies often do not know whether they have the right number of licenses for their needs. SSA has not compared the inventories of software licenses that are currently in use with information on purchased licenses, as we recommended. In addition, SSA lacks a documented process for monitoring its investments in operations and maintenance, infrastructure, and cybersecurity, which represented about 90 percent of its Fiscal Year 2024 IT budget. We recommended that SSA define and implement policies and procedures to review and approve investments in operations. Doing so would better position SSA to identify opportunities to reduce costs and make more informed IT investment decisions.

Priority recommendations in two of these areas—making service delivery more efficient and managing IT investments cost-effectively—are also included on GAO's High-Risk List.[4] We also identified challenges SSA has faced managing its workload and updating its eligibility criteria for disability benefits under the high-risk area improving and modernizing federal disability programs. Several other government-wide high risk areas have direct implications for SSA and its operations, including ensuring the cybersecurity of the nation. We also identified actions SSA should take that result in cost savings or enhanced revenue collection or reduce duplication, overlap and fragmentation. For example, we recommended that SSA better evaluate its payments to states for death data to ensure it has the information to determine whether the current pricing structure reflects statutorily authorized costs. More information on our Duplication and Cost Savings work can be found on the GAO website.

[4]This list identifies government operations with greater vulnerabilities to fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement. GAO, *High-Risk Series: Heightened Attention Could Save Billions More and Improve Government Efficiency and Effectiveness*, GAO-25-107743 (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 25, 2025).

A comprehensive list of open recommendations, including new priority recommendations, and information about their status can be found on the GAO website at Recommendations Database | U.S. GAO. Copies of this letter are being sent to the appropriate congressional committees.[5] This letter will also be available at Priority Recommendations | U.S. GAO.

We would welcome an opportunity to discuss how to address our open recommendations, as we pursue the shared goal of working to increase efficiency and effectiveness of government programs and spending. Please do not hesitate to contact me or Cindy Brown Barnes, Managing Director, Education, Workforce, and Income Security, at brownbarnesc@gao.gov. Contact points for our offices of Congressional Relations and Media Relations may be found on the last page of this letter. Thank you for your personal attention to these important issues.

Sincerely,

//SIGNED//

Orice Williams Brown
Acting Comptroller General
of the United States

cc: Michael L. Russo, Chief Information Officer, SSA

[5]We also help Congress identify congressional oversight actions that can help agencies implement priority recommendations, such as incorporating them into legislation. James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023, Pub. L. No. 117-263, § 7211(a)(2),136 Stat. 2395, 3668 (2022) (codified at 31 U.S.C. § 719 note). Congress can also use its budget, appropriations, and oversight processes to incentivize executive branch agencies to act on our recommendations and monitor their progress. For example, Congress can hold hearings focused on agencies' progress in implementing priority recommendations, withhold funds when appropriate, or take other actions to provide incentives for agencies to act.

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