



Heritage Action Supports Rep. Todd Rokita's Making D.I. Work for All Americans Act

This week, Rep. Todd Rokita (R-Ind.) introduced the Making D.I. Work for All Americans Act ([H.R. 6532](#)). This legislation would reform the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) program to save it from insolvency. By correcting the many flaws and inefficiencies in the program through this legislation, SSDI will better serve individuals with disabilities.

As The Heritage Foundation [explains](#), the SSDI program has existed for nearly 60 years. Over that time, it has morphed from a relatively small-scale, anti-poverty program into a massive system that provides benefits to one out of every 20 working-age individuals. Despite its size and expense, the program fails to keep millions out of poverty. Rather than maintaining the current benefit structure, which provides higher benefits to individuals with higher pre-disability earnings, SSDI could better protect the disabled from poverty and improve the program's long-term finances through a flat benefit linked to the federal poverty level as proposed in H.R. 6532.

As Rachel Greszler, Research Fellow in Economics, Budget and Entitlements at The Heritage Foundation [notes](#), implementing a flat benefit is key to SSDI reform and refocuses benefits on poverty prevention rather than income replacement. H.R. 6532 rightly acknowledges that those who are already disabled do not have the ability to increase their savings or to purchase private insurance, so they should not be subject to changes in benefits. Accordingly, the flat benefit applies only to new SSDI applicants as current SSDI beneficiaries would continue to receive their same benefit checks.

This legislation moves in the right direction towards adopting a second key reform recommended by The Heritage Foundation—eliminating non-medical factors in the benefits determination process. The Social Security Administration's (SSA) current medical-vocational grid rules allow individuals to receive SSDI awards based on factors other than mental or physical disabilities, such as age, education, skill, and ability to speak English. These non-medical factors alone cannot cause disability and so this bill establishes a process for reviewing the appropriateness of these factors.

Other important reforms in H.R. 6532 include allowing SSA to reduce fraud by considering social media activity when making a disability determination. The bill would also incorporate a [Heritage recommendation](#) to eliminate the requirement that SSA compensate disability attorneys, requiring instead that compensation be worked out between a recipient and their attorney. These common sense reforms increase transparency and accountability within the program.

Decades ago, Washington politicians promised baby boomers health, retirement, and disability benefits that are no longer affordable because the programs were not [designed](#) in a way to properly manage growth, fraud, and increasing costs. Short-term fixes like the one in the 2015 Bipartisan Budget Act [exacerbated](#) long-term financial problems. Congress must act swiftly and comprehensively to reform SSDI as Americans face the consequences of this neglect. The Making D.I. Work for All Americans Act is a course correction that our nation can no longer afford to avoid.

Heritage Action supports this legislation, encourages Representatives and Senators to support it, and reserves the right to key vote in the future.