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December 10, 2019

Gail S. Ennis
Inspector General
Social Security Administration
6401 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21235

Dear Inspector General Ennis:

We write to request that the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) review the Social Security Administration's (SSA's) efforts to address ongoing Social Security-related telephone scams. Over the past year, SSA has been handling an increasing volume of telephone calls from the public regarding calls threatening arrest or other legal action due to Social Security number or account problems. Using the good name of Social Security, these scammers have defrauded the American public of millions of their hard-earned dollars. SSA provides critical benefits to seniors, individuals with disabilities, and their families, so any interruption in service, confusion about the agency's communication with the public, or changes to public confidence when interacting with SSA is of great concern. We are also concerned about the impact of the telephone scams on the agency's limited resources.

Given the critical importance of ensuring strong service to the American people, we are requesting an OIG report that answers the following questions surrounding the telephone scam:

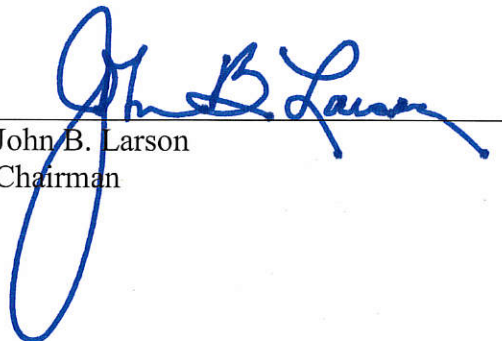
1. How have the telephone imposter scams affected SSA's day-to-day operations?
 - a. Which agency components have been affected the most?
 - b. What metrics is SSA using to measure the effect on the agency?
 - c. What is known about the impact on 1-800 number call volume and wait times, as well as field office traffic and call volumes?
2. What specific activities has SSA initiated in-house and in conjunction with other parties to address the telephone imposter scams?
 - a. What level of personnel and other resources has the agency directed at these scam-related activities?
 - b. What steps has SSA taken to maintain the effectiveness of service delivery in the areas facing diverted resources?
3. What other initiatives or approaches should SSA consider to address the telephone scams, better protect Americans, and reduce its disruption to agency customer service and workloads?

Separately, we would also appreciate information on the size, scope, and severity of the telephone imposter scams, and any notable trends or characteristics among the scam allegations, including the following:

1. Are the scams reported to the OIG increasing or decreasing? What changes has the OIG seen since November 19, 2019 when the OIG and SSA implemented the new process for the public to report telephone scams?
2. Over the past year, have the scams reported to the OIG changed in their characteristics, scope, or severity?
3. Have the scams reported to the OIG affected particular demographic groups, or geographic areas, more than others? Has that changed over time, and if so, how?
4. What portion of the calls involved the loss of funds, and what have you learned about these victims?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this request. Should you or your staff have any questions, please contact Kathryn Olson, the Social Security Subcommittee Majority Staff Director, at (202) 225-9263 and Amy Shuart, the Social Security Subcommittee Minority Staff Director, at (202) 225-4021.

Sincerely,



John B. Larson
Chairman



Tom Reed
Ranking Member