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U.S. House of Representatives

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December 10, 2019

The Honorable Andrew Saul
Commissioner
Social Security Administration
6401 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21235

Dear Commissioner Saul:

We are deeply concerned about the ongoing Social Security-related telephone imposter scams affecting people across the United States.

In these scams, fraudsters falsely claim to be from the Social Security Administration (SSA) and seek to persuade their targets to hand over their money, bank information, or Social Security numbers. According to SSA's Office of the Inspector General (OIG): "Scammers using the good name of Social Security to mislead victims may use a variety of tactics, often stating that there is a problem with your Social Security number, and you must pay a fine or fee to resolve the problem or you may be arrested. They may demand payment through gift cards, pre-paid debit cards, wire transfers, or cash; or they may ask for your bank account information over the phone."

While SSA has taken steps in recent months to prevent and raise public awareness about these imposter calls, we are alarmed that the scams continue to be widespread and severe.

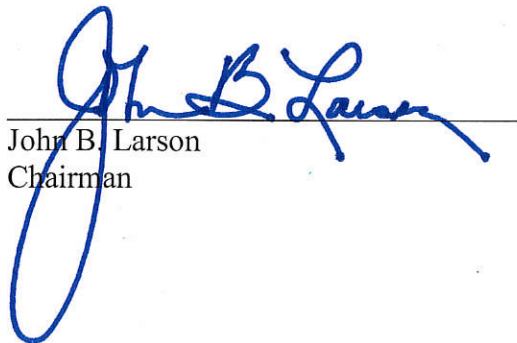
The American people expect and deserve nothing less than swift and strong action by SSA to combat these fraud scams. In addition to the risk of individuals becoming victims to one of the scams resulting in financial loss, these scams pose unique risk to SSA's ability serve the public and the public's trust in the agency. In light of our concerns, we are asking the OIG to review SSA's response to telephone imposter scams. We also request that you provide a written response to the following questions:

1. What is the current size, scope, and severity of the telephone imposter scams, and how has this changed over the last year? How is SSA tracking the scams and the harm to the American people?
2. What steps has SSA taken to combat telephone imposter scams, and what additional steps is SSA planning – both within SSA, and with other agencies and external partners?

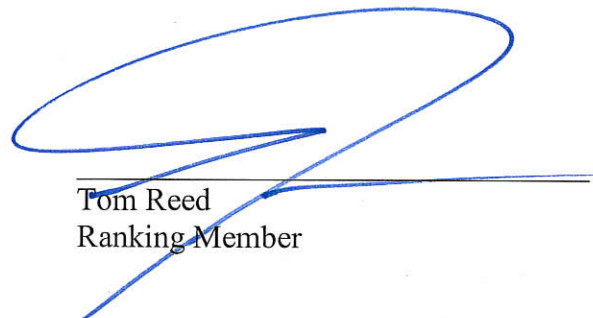
3. How is SSA alerting the public to telephone imposter scams and informing people about how to protect themselves from fraudsters?
4. How is SSA maximizing opportunities to educate the public about telephone scams in SSA's field offices, on its national 1-800 number, and through other SSA in-person, mailed, electronic, and telephone communications?
5. How have the telephone imposter scams affected SSA's services to the public? How is SSA tracking the effect of the scams on the agency's service delivery at the national, regional, and local level?
6. How is SSA ensuring that all agency components and offices are working in an accountable, coordinated, and effective manner to combat the telephone imposter scams?
 - a. We understand that you have now designated a senior agency official to lead SSA's work to address the telephone imposter scams. What are the official's roles and responsibilities?
 - b. We understand that you have now established an agency-wide Task Force to combat the scams. What SSA components are participating, how is the Task Force operating, and what are its roles and responsibilities?
 - c. How is SSA evaluating its efforts to combat the scams?
7. What lessons has SSA learned from the Internal Revenue Service and other federal agencies that have been affected by similar telephone imposter scams, and how is SSA applying those lessons?

Please provide your response no later than December 24, 2019. 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