



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS
CHAIRMAN RICHARD E. NEAL

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**Ways and Means Democrats Introduce
Legislation to Protect Seniors and People with
Disabilities During the COVID-19 Crisis**

WASHINGTON, DC - Today, Ways and Means Worker and Family Support Subcommittee Chairman Danny K. Davis (D-IL) and Social Security Subcommittee Chairman John B. Larson (D-CT) introduced the *Fairness for Seniors and People with Disabilities During COVID-19 Act*, legislation to protect seniors, surviving spouses, children, and people with severe disabilities from being forced to repay extra Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits they may have received in error because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The legislation comes at a critical moment, as reports indicate the Social Security Administration (SSA) may soon begin issuing letters demanding beneficiaries repay hundreds or even thousands of dollars they no longer have, in the middle of a pandemic. These beneficiaries did not know they were being overpaid, could do nothing to prevent these extra payments, and may have little ability to pay them back.

Ways and Means Committee **Chairman Richard E. Neal (D-MA)**, an original cosponsor of the legislation, emphasized the urgency with which Congress must act to address this looming problem. "Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Social Security Administration rightly prioritized paying benefits to eligible Americans, and temporarily suspended actions to reduce or cut off benefits. As a result, by no fault of their own, some of the most vulnerable members of our society unknowingly received extra benefit payments," said Neal. "Collecting these COVID-19 overpayments would be unjust, throwing affected seniors and people with disabilities into crisis during an ongoing recession. I applaud Subcommittee Chairmen Davis and

Larson for introducing this bill and standing up for Americans who are struggling during these frightening and uncertain times.”

“Low income, disabled and seniors, many of whom are always at the precipice of falling into immediate life crisis, now face a new potentially disruptive conflict in their lives,” **said Chairman Davis**. “Some of these individuals, through no fault of their own, received automatic COVID-19 benefits in excess, in retrospect, of what the regulations prescribe. Attempting to ‘claw back’ some of these payments is not only impractical as the recipients are extremely unlikely to have the resources to return the payments, but it is also cruel and potentially dangerous as they could be forced into making impossible choices as to what to give up in their meager resources in an attempt to respond to any such demand. I believe the only just and humane approach to this confusion is a ‘no-fault’ stance to this looming threat; that is, hold these recipients harmless against any errors on the part of the government. No one in government ever intended that the COVID-19 benefits should cause any harm or injustice to the recipients.”

“Through no fault of their own, some Social Security and Supplemental Security Income beneficiaries have been over paid by the Social Security Administration,” **said Chairman Larson**. “While SSA was right to prioritize paying benefits during this pandemic, expecting Americans to repay these benefits while in the midst of an economic recession and health care crisis is wrong and unfair. These are our most vulnerable populations who have been affected, they don’t have the funds to pay this overpayment back. I’m proud to work with Chairmen Davis and Neal to fix this problem with the *Fairness for Seniors and People with Disabilities During COVID-19 Act*.”

A fact sheet on the legislation is available [HERE](#).

Full text of the legislation can be found [HERE](#).

The *Fairness for Seniors and People with Disabilities During COVID-19 Act* is endorsed by AARP, Alliance for Retired Americans, American Council of the Blind, American Association on Health and Disability, Autism Society of America, Community Legal Services of Philadelphia, [Easterseals](#), Epilepsy Foundation, [Justice in Aging](#), Lakeshore Foundation, Latinos for a Secure Retirement, NAACP, National Alliance on Mental Illness, [National Association of Disability Representatives](#), National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, National Employment Law Project, [National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives](#), [Social Security Works](#), and [The Arc of the United States](#).

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