

New Mexico Ranks Tenth in Nation for Highest Disability Backlog

American Association of People with Disabilities and Allsup release state Social Security Disability Insurance backlog rankings

Washington, DC – July 31, 2007 – The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD), the country's largest cross-disability membership organization, and Allsup Inc., the nation's leading [Social Security disability representation](#) company, today released [state rankings based on the growing backlog in the federal Social Security Disability Insurance \(SSDI\) program](#) that revealed hearing offices in New Mexico have the tenth worst backlog in the country. In New Mexico, more than 7,000 people are in limbo waiting for a decision.

[More than 1.4 million Americans are currently struggling through the SSDI application, reconsideration and appeals processes, which take at least two years to complete for most people.](#)

The five states with the worst rankings are Kansas, District of Columbia, North Dakota, Michigan and Alabama. Virginia, Arizona, Massachusetts, Nevada and Hawaii receive the best disability rankings. Separate backlog figures are not available for Alaska, Idaho, South Dakota, Vermont and Wyoming. For [the complete list of rankings](#), log on to <http://www.allsup.com>

“As this information clearly demonstrates, the disability appeals process is in crisis as 730,000 disabled Americans are currently facing delays at the appeals level alone, causing extensive delays in obtaining their rightful benefits,” said Andrew J. Imperato, AAPD's president and chief executive officer. “Congress and the Social Security Administration desperately need to work together to deploy additional resources to address this urgent and growing problem that affects the financial well being of disabled citizens and their families.”

[According to the Social Security Administration](#), the average processing time at the hearing level for disability cases has increased from 308 days in 2001 to 524 days in 2007. A key reason for this growth is the shrinking SSA field staff, largely due to retirement. The Social Security Administration was 30 percent smaller in 2002 than 20 years before. From August 2005 to January 2007, about 2,000 field office employees left SSA without being replaced. Meanwhile, since 1990, the number of disabled workers drawing SSDI has more than doubled, from 3 million to 6.8 million, as the aging baby boom generation begins to put far greater demands on the agency's resources.

“The disability backlog challenge is so immense that it will take an all-hands-on-deck approach to resolve,” said Jim Allsup, president and CEO of Allsup Inc. “Government and industry must work together to meet the demands of the disabled today and in the future. We see the impact of the problem every

day as we work with tens of thousands of disabled individuals and their families. There is no question the Social Security Administration needs more resources to meet this challenge. Companies like Allsup contribute by providing solutions in the marketplace -- helping disabled Americans navigate -- and reduce the time spent in -- the SSDI process. It is important that citizens with disabilities know they have options available to assist them in their time of need.”

The rankings were created by comparing the number of backlogged disability applications to the number of disabled beneficiaries in each state. The most recent backlog figures are from September 2006. The beneficiary figures were just released by the Social Security Administration and are from year-end 2006.

Congress created the payroll tax-funded Social Security Disability Insurance program in 1956 to protect Americans who became disabled and could no longer work. Individuals who become disabled qualify for benefits if they have worked and paid into the program for at least five of the last 10 years.

AAPD’s mission is to organize the disability community to be a powerful force for change—socially, politically and economically. Toward that end, AAPD is dedicated to educating policymakers, businesses and the general public about disability issues, providing membership benefits, cultivating emerging leaders, promoting mentoring and career exploration, and conducting non-partisan voter registration and voter mobilization campaigns. AAPD helps to unite the diverse community of people with disabilities, including their family, friends and supporters, and to be a national voice for change in implementing the goals of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency. For more information, visit AAPD’s website at www.aapd.com.

Allsup has helped more than 85,000 disabled Americans obtain about \$1.4 billion in retroactive payments from Social Security and Medicare. This number does not include ongoing payments, which are much higher. [Allsup screens individuals to ensure eligibility, develops an accurate factual record, and helps shepherd applicants through the disability decision process](#), leaving the Social Security Administration to focus on issuing disability decisions and clearing back-logged claims. For more information, log on to <http://www.allsup.com>.

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