

Turn to Us

Autumn 2021



Turning things around at SSA:

President Biden appoints new Acting Commissioner

President Biden recently removed from office the top two Trump-era officials at Social Security. Biden has since appointed a new Acting Commissioner, Kilolo Kijakazi, to serve until a permanent commissioner is confirmed by the Senate. Kijakazi had been serving as Deputy Commissioner for Retirement and Disability Policy. The expectation is that she will take steps to reverse changes made by Trump appointees and improve protections for those entitled to disability or retirement benefits.

Kijakazi replaces former Commissioner, Andrew Saul, who was fired by President Biden after refusing to resign his position. At the same time, Deputy Commissioner, David Black, voluntarily resigned.

Both men had come under fire for proposing or implementing changes that make it more difficult for individuals to secure benefits such as:

» **Eliminating illiteracy as a factor in determining whether a disabled person could perform another job**

» **Having appeal decisions made by agency lawyers who were not evaluated or approved to serve as judges**

» **Proposing to cut retroactive benefit awards from 12 months to 6 months.**

The new acting commissioner has already acted to make it easier for those with severe disabilities to receive prompt payment of their claims. On August 16, she approved the addition of 12 new conditions (most of them incurable cancers) to Social Security's list of Compassionate Allowances.