

# TRUMP BUDGET: SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY INSURANCE CUTS

*Despite President Trump's campaign promise to not cut Social Security, his budget calls for \$72 billion in cuts to the program. This cut could hurt the nine million Americans who currently rely on Social Security Disability Insurance and already face enormous obstacles to get the care they need.*

## Trump's Budget Proposal Called For \$72 Billion In Cuts To The Social Security Disability Program

### TRUMP'S BUDGET CALLED FOR \$72 BILLION IN CUTS TO THE SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY INSURANCE PROGRAM OVER 10 YEARS

**Despite Campaign Pledges Not To Cut Social Security, Trump's Budget Proposal Called for \$72 Billion In Cuts To The Social Security Disability Insurance Program Over 10 Years.** According to NBC News, "The president also strongly opposed cuts to Social Security during the campaign, but the new budget would make cuts to Social Security Disability Insurance, which covered over 10 million recipients as of December 2015. It would save about \$72 billion through changes to disability programs over the next ten years." [NBC News, [5/23/17](#)]

### White House Budget Director Mick Mulvaney Dismissed SSDI As "A Very Wasteful Program," A Claim Not Supported By The Facts

**Budget Director Mick Mulvaney: Social Security Disability Insurance Was "A Very Wasteful Program, And We Want To Try And Fix That."** According to Michael Hiltzik in the Los Angeles Times, "Here are Mulvaney's words, in their entirety. They came in the very last 20 seconds of a seven-minute interview, delivered with a condescending simper: 'Let me ask you a question,' Mulvaney said. 'Do you really think that Social Security disability insurance is part of what people think of when they think of Social Security? I don't think so. It's the fastest-growing program. It grew tremendously under President Obama. It's a very wasteful program, and we want to try and fix that.'" [Michael Hiltzik – Los Angeles Times, [3/20/17](#)]

- **Improper Disability Payments, Cited By OMB As The Basis For The Charge That SSDI Was Wasteful, Amounted To About 1% Of Total Disability Outlays.** According to the Washington Post's Fact Checker, "The OMB pointed to improper disability payments, which can result from mistakes or incorrect information from either the Social Security Administration or from the beneficiary. In fiscal 2011-2015, there were \$6.6 billion in overpayments and \$1.5 billion in underpayments — but they represented 0.99 percent and 0.22 percent of total disability outlays, respectively, so it's a stretch to use these figures to say the program is "very wasteful."" [Fact Checker – Washington Post, [4/7/17](#)]
- **Fewer Than 40% Of People Who Applied For Social Security Disability Insurance Received Benefits.** According to Vox, "Former Social Security Administration commissioners, who actually ran the program, have strongly challenged this narrative, noting that fewer than 40 percent of people who apply get benefits, and many people who do have disabilities are rejected; many rejected applicants spend years appealing and reapplying until they can get help." [Vox, [8/1/16](#)]

## **SSDI Qualifications Are So Strict That Beneficiaries Are More Than Three Times Likelier To Die In A Given Year Than Non-Beneficiaries Of The Same Age**

**Social Security Administration: “Disability Beneficiaries Are Among The Most Severely Impaired In The Country,” More Than Three Times Likelier To Die In A Given Year Than Other People Of The Same Age.** According to the Social Security Administration, “Because the Act defines disability so strictly, Social Security disability beneficiaries are among the most severely impaired in the country. In fact, Social Security disability beneficiaries are more than three times as likely to die in a year as other people the same age. Among those who start receiving disability benefits at the age of 55, 1-in-5 men and 1-in-7 women die within five years of the onset of their disabilities.” [Social Security Administration, accessed [5/22/17](#)]

- **Among Those Who Began Receiving Disability Benefits At The Age Of 55, 20% Of Men And About 15% Of Women Died Within Five Years Of The Onset Of Their Disabilities.** According to the Social Security Administration, “Because the Act defines disability so strictly, Social Security disability beneficiaries are among the most severely impaired in the country. In fact, Social Security disability beneficiaries are more than three times as likely to die in a year as other people the same age. Among those who start receiving disability benefits at the age of 55, 1-in-5 men and 1-in-7 women die within five years of the onset of their disabilities.” [Social Security Administration, accessed [5/22/17](#)]
- **Eight Thousand People Died While Waiting For A Disability Hearing In Fiscal Year 2016.** According to The Kansas City Star, “‘The situation is really bad for the claimants right now. ... The bottom line is inadequate funding of Social Security,’ said Lisa Ekman, director of governmental affairs for the National Organization of Social Security Claimants’ Representatives. It is an association of attorneys representing people with disabilities. ‘Eight thousand people died during fiscal year 2016 who were waiting for a (disability) hearing,’ Ekman said. ‘That’s 23 people a day, almost one an hour to get a hearing. ... We see people who lose their homes. We see people who are evicted. We see people who can’t afford to pay for medications, who become very debilitated while they wait. It creates people who are homeless.’” [Kansas City Star, [3/19/17](#)]

## **AS A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, TRUMP REPEATEDLY PROMISED TO “SAVE SOCIAL SECURITY WITHOUT ANY CUTS”**

**Trump, April 2015: “I’m The Only Repub Who Won’t Cut Social Security.”** According to a Tweet by Donald Trump, “The reason Ed Schultz said nice things about me is that I’m the only Repub who won’t cut Social Security, etc. I’ll make America rich again!” [Donald Trump – Twitter, [4/21/15](#)]

**Trump, May 2015: “I Am Going To Save Social Security Without Any Cuts.”** According to a Tweet by Donald Trump, “I was the first & only potential GOP candidate to state there will be no cuts to Social Security, Medicare & Medicaid. Huckabee copied me.” [Donald Trump – Twitter, [5/7/15](#)]

**Trump, In May 2015, Promised “Not To Cut Social Security.”** According to a Tweet by Donald Trump, “Huckabee is a nice guy but will never be able to bring in the funds so as not to cut Social Security, Medicare & Medicaid. I will.” [Donald Trump – Twitter, [5/7/15](#)]

**Trump, May 2015: “I Am Going To Save Social Security Without Any Cuts.”** According to a Tweet by Donald Trump, “I am going to save Social Security without any cuts. I know where to get the money from. Nobody else does.’ - my @SRQRepublicans speech[.]” [Donald Trump – Twitter, [5/21/15](#)]

**In His Campaign Launch Speech, Trump Promised To “Save Medicare, Medicaid And Social Security Without Cuts.”** According to TIME, “[Trump:] We’ve got nothing. We’ve got Social Security that’s

going to be destroyed if somebody like me doesn't bring money into the country. All these other people want to cut the hell out of it. I'm not going to cut it at all; I'm going to bring money in, and we're going to save it. [...] Save Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security without cuts. Have to do it.” [TIME, [6/16/15](#)]

## **MULVANEY INSISTED THAT CUTS TO SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY INSURANCE ARE NOT CUTS TO SOCIAL SECURITY...**

**OMB Director Mick Mulvaney: “If You Ask 999 People Out Of A Thousand, They’d Tell You Social Security Disability Is Not Part Of Social Security.”** According to NBC News, “The president also strongly opposed cuts to Social Security during the campaign, but the new budget would make cuts to Social Security Disability Insurance, which covered over 10 million recipients as of December 2015. It would save about \$72 billion through changes to disability programs over the next ten years. Asked about the discrepancy, Mulvaney suggested that the president intended his promises to apply only to retirement benefits. ‘If you ask 999 people out of a thousand, they’d tell you Social Security disability is not part of Social Security,’ Mulvaney said.” [NBC News, [5/23/17](#)]

**Mulvaney: “Do You Really Think That Social Security Disability Insurance Is Part Of What People Think Of when They Think Social Security? I Don’t Think So.”** According to Michael Hiltzik in the Los Angeles Times, “Any cut to disability would be a major violation of Trump’s oft-repeated campaign pledge not to cut Social Security, Medicaid or Medicare. Trump also broke that promise, by the way, by endorsing the American Health Care Act, the House Republican Obamacare repeal plan that incorporates a stunning \$880 billion in Medicaid cuts. It turns out that Mulvaney was setting up a flagrant deception during that ‘Face the Nation’ appearance. He asked moderator John Dickerson, ‘Do you really think that Social Security disability insurance is part of what people think of when they think of Social Security? I don’t think so.’ [Michael Hiltzik – Los Angeles Times, [5/22/17](#)]

### **...BUT, THEY ARE.**

**National Academy Of Social Insurance: Social Security Disability Insurance Is Part Of The Social Security Program, Which Benefits Workers Who Could No Longer Work Due To A Significant Illness Or Impairment.** According to the National Academy of Social Insurance, “Social Security Disability Insurance (DI) pays monthly benefits to workers who are no longer able to work due to a significant illness or impairment that is expected to last at least a year or to result in death within a year. It is part of the Social Security program that also pays retirement benefits to the vast majority of older Americans. Benefits are based on the disabled workers past earnings and are paid to the disabled worker and to his or her dependent family members. To be eligible, a disabled worker must have worked in jobs covered by Social Security. In July 2015, 8.9 million disabled workers received benefits.” [National Academy of Social Insurance, accessed [5/22/17](#)]

- **Center On Budget And Policy Priorities: “Disability Insurance Is An Integral Part Of Social Security.”** According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, “Disability Insurance is an integral part of Social Security. Workers contribute to DI and earn its protection in case they can no longer support themselves because of a severe and long-lasting disability. The Social Security Administration administers DI.” [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, [8/1/16](#)]

**Social Security Works President Nancy Altman: Claiming SSDI Cuts Are Not Social Security Cuts “Is Analogous To Saying Cuts To The Marines Are Not Cuts To Our Military Budget.”** According to Social Security Works, “The following is a statement from Nancy Altman, President of Social Security Works, in reaction to reports that Donald Trump’s budget will contain cuts to Medicaid and Social Security: ‘Donald Trump’s frequent promises to protect Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid were a cornerstone of his campaign. [...] In true Orwellian fashion, Trump budget director Mick Mulvaney claims that cuts to Social

Security Disability Insurance are somehow not cuts to Social Security. That is analogous to saying cuts to the Marines are not cuts to our military budget. Disability insurance is an essential component of the protections workers earn when they contribute to Social Security with every paycheck. This budget is an utter betrayal of the voters who believed Trump's repeated promises." [Social Security Works, [5/21/17](#)]

## **Nearly 9 Million Americans Rely On SSDI To Stay Afloat**

### **NEARLY 9 MILLION AMERICANS DIRECTLY BENEFITTED FROM SSDI IN 2016**

**Nearly Nine Million Americans Directly Benefited From The Social Security Disability Insurance Program In 2016.** According to the Social Security Administration, the social security disability insurance program had 8,808,736 beneficiaries in 2016. [Social Security Administration, accessed [5/22/17](#)]

### **17 PERCENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFICIARIES RECEIVE DISABILITY**

**Seventeen Percent Of Social Security Beneficiaries Were Disabled Workers.** According to the Washington Post's Fact Checker, "About 73 percent of 61 million Social Security beneficiaries are retired workers, and about 17 percent are disabled workers and their dependents. The rest are survivors of beneficiaries." [Fact Checker – Washington Post, [4/7/17](#)]

## **Workers Of All Ages Qualify For SSDI, And A Current 20-Year-Old Has A 25% Chance Of Becoming Disabled Before Age 67**

### **SSA: "A 20-YEAR-OLD WORKER HAS A 1-IN-4 CHANCE OF BECOMING DISABLED BEFORE REACHING FULL RETIREMENT AGE"**

**Social Security Administration: "A 20-Year-Old Worker Has A 1-In-4 Chance Of Becoming Disabled Before Reaching Full Retirement Age."** According to the Social Security Administration via Benefits.gov, "Social Security pays disability benefits to you and certain members of your family if you have worked long enough and have a medical condition that has prevented you from working or is expected to prevent you from working for at least 12 months or end in death. Studies show that a 20-year-old worker has a 1-in-4 chance of becoming disabled before reaching full retirement age." [Social Security Administration – Benefits.gov, accessed [5/22/17](#)]

**The Average SSDI Beneficiary Is Middle-Aged And Has 22 Years Of Work Experience.** According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, "The large majority of DI beneficiaries have extensive work histories; the average beneficiary had 22 years of work experience and earned middle-class wages before becoming disabled. A typical DI beneficiary is in late middle age — about 75 percent are 50 or older, and nearly 35 percent are 60 or older — and suffers from a severe mental, musculoskeletal, or other debilitating impairment." [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, [8/1/16](#)]

## **"If I Didn't Get Social Security, I Would Be Out On The Streets"**

## **A CORPORATE VP NEVER THOUGHT SHE WOULD NEED SSDI UNTIL A SERIES OF BRAIN SURGERIES LEFT HER SAFETY NET DEPLETED**

**Former Corporate VP And International Business Leader Jarita Davis Underwent Unexpected Brain Surgeries That Left Her Safety Net Depleted.** According to a blog post by Jarita Davis on the Social Security Administration website, “I’ve always strategically planned for the unexpected. I’m a former corporate vice president of operations and international business leader of more than 30 years’ experience. My husband and I, together, had a significant income, owned a home in a country club, guard-gated community in Southern California, and were extensive travelers, etc. Then, the season changed – unexpectedly. In 2012, I started to show medical symptoms from an old auto accident that had caused a brain injury. I had difficulty walking, memory loss, etc. My neurosurgeon explained what was occurring, and that major brain surgery was required for me to continue living. My first brain surgery was performed in July 2012; my second brain surgery in September 2012; and between 2012 and 2014, I underwent five brain/skull surgeries. My husband became my full-time caregiver, and our financial safety net was all compromised due to my health.” [Jarita Davis – Social Security Administration, [10/19/15](#)]

- **Davis: “I Never Expected I’d Need SSDI,” But “After 30 Years In The Workforce And Contributing To The Federal Insurance Compensation Act, I Sure Am Glad My Disability Insurance Was There For Me In My Time Of Need.”** According to a blog post by Jarita Davis on the Social Security Administration website, “I might sound somewhat perplexed, because it’s all new to me and isn’t what I had expected to deal with in life. Yet, I am realistic and understand that ‘things happen’ to all people. You hear about the horrifying, multi-year process involved when applying for SSDI benefits. These stories are in the media and everywhere, but I didn’t have to pay close attention, because I never expected I’d need SSDI. [...] So, after 30 years in the workforce and contributing to the Federal Insurance Compensation Act (FICA), I sure am glad my disability insurance was there for me in my time of need.” [Jarita Davis – Social Security Administration, [10/19/15](#)]

## **CHARLOTTE, A COLLEGE STUDENT WHO WORKED THREE JOBS, SUFFERED A STROKE AT WORK ONE DAY: “SOCIAL SECURITY HELPS [KEEP] ME FROM BEING HOMELESS”**

**Charlotte, A College Student Working Three Jobs While Caring For Her Cancer-Stricken Mother, Had A Stroke At Work One Day And Her Movement Was Severely Limited As A Result.** According to Charlotte’s profile on the Social Security Administration’s Faces and Facts of Disability website, “I had, in 2007, a right-sided stroke. I was at work. All of a sudden, I started to get disoriented, and my manager told me to go to the emergency room. I went down there, and they told me, ‘Charlotte, you’re not going home.’ I had the first stroke one day, and the next day I ended up having another stroke. I stayed in the hospital about a week. Before the stroke, I was going to college, getting my B.A. in social work. I was working three jobs, and I was trying to take care of my mother also. She had breast cancer. All this contributed to stress. I was a busy person. I was too busy. My condition limits me from walking long distances and climbing steps. Now I need to use grab bars to get in and out of the shower. My niece stops by sometimes and asks me if I need anything. She usually helps me hang curtains and stuff like that. I’ll sew stuff.” [Faces and Facts of Disability – Social Security Administration, accessed [5/22/17](#)]

- **Charlotte: “Social Security Helps Me From Being Homeless. It Helps Me With Paying My Bills—My Electric Bill, Food To Eat On My Table, And My Medication.”** According to Charlotte’s profile on the Social Security Administration’s Faces and Facts of Disability website, “Social Security helps me from being homeless. It helps me with paying my bills—my electric bill,

food to eat on my table, and my medication. I have a lot of medication. I can't imagine my life without Social Security, because if I didn't get Social Security, I would be out on the streets." [Faces and Facts of Disability – Social Security Administration, accessed [5/22/17](#)]