

# Social Security Card Centers

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In the last few years, Social Security has opened a handful of Card Centers in large metropolitan areas. Existing personnel was used to staff these new offices, and Social Security Commissioner Michael Astrue intends to open at least 20 more over the next couple of years.

This concept – while it sounds good in general - was not well thought out. In fact, **Social Security Card Centers are an example of how to provide really bad public service!**

During fiscal year 2007, SSA processed 17.6 million Social Security Number (SSN) applications. Most of them were processed in more than field offices across the country (and there are about 1,300 offices). Virtually all of Sosa's field office staff has been trained to process SSN applications. This would include clericals, Service Representatives, Claims Representatives, and management.

With the opening of Card Centers, this is no longer allowed.

In areas where there is a Card Center, the following scenario occurs many times a day: a visitor goes into a field office believing they can get a replacement Social Security card. They can't! Instead, they are referred to a Card Center – which requires another trip to another office, usually miles away. If public transportation is not readily available, that creates another problem for people who do not drive.

Those who have been turned-away include the elderly, the disabled, the poor and indigent. They are young mothers who are filing for public assistance. They work and need help during their lunch hour.

After you arrive at the Las Vegas Card Center, you will find yourself at the back of the line outside the building. On average, the line is about 100 deep and the waiting room is filled to capacity (175 spaces). This results in a 2-3 hour wait to have your application processed.

Because of the large number of people waiting to be served, employees are **forced to work** mandatory overtime. Many workdays last until 7:00 pm. This is a tremendous drain on SSA's overtime budget and it is money that could be better spent in processing claims.

## **SSA is unwilling to change this policy. Therefore, AFGE believes members of Congress should:**

- Request that Commissioner Astrue reverse SSA's policy of forcing the public to leave a field office and commute to a Social Security Card Center.
- Request that Commissioner Astrue suspend all plans to open additional Social Security Card Centers until this policy is reversed.
- Request the authorizing committees to hold hearings on policies and problems related to Social Security Card Centers.
- Request Appropriation subcommittees on Labor, HHS and Education to include language that would prevent SSA from using appropriated dollars to fund Social Security Card Centers.

*AFGE is committed to serve, as we always have, as the employees' advocate AND as a watchdog for clients, taxpayers, and their elected representatives.*