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COMMUNITY CHANGE

Sample Op-eds and Letters to the Editor on Disability Insurance

January 2015

1) Sample Op-ed, approx.. 450 words

Disgusting Attacks on Disabled Workers and the Social Security System

I am very concerned about the recent attacks against Social Security Disability beneficiaries – both the comments of Senator Rand Paul, who openly mocked people on disability, and a new rule in Congress that would make it more difficult to extend the solvency of the Disability Insurance program.

I worked all my life, sometimes piecing together (2 or 3) jobs to support myself (*and my family*) until a serious (*illness, accident, whatever it was* _____) depleted my savings and I realized that I could not go back to work. Now I depend on the check for \$ _____ from the Social Security Disability system to get by.

Just like me, there are millions of Americans across the country who count on these earned benefits to make ends meet. That is why we should be strengthening our Social Security Disability system and making sure that everyone pays into the system at the same rate, rather than eroding this important part of our society and disparaging those of us with disabilities, as Senator Paul recently did.

Just to be clear, Social Security Disability Insurance is coverage that workers like myself have earned. Workers and employers pay 6.2% of pay into the system with 5.3% going to the Old Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI) and .9% going to the Disability Trust Fund. A simple reallocation of that rate – as Congress has done 11 times in recent decades – would prevent a devastating 20% benefit cut in 2016.

And it is not easy to qualify. It takes months of paperwork, perseverance and doctors' examinations to get on disability. Our Social Security Disability standard is among the strictest in the developed world. Beneficiaries suffer from severe conditions like cancer, kidney failure and multiple sclerosis.

For Sen. Paul to imply that we are just a bunch of freeloaders with backaches and anxiety is an insult.

Thank goodness there are those who recognize that the Social Security system is at the very foundation of this country and that Disability Insurance is an essential part of that Social Security system. Social Security and Disability are the lifelines that keep so many people (*in this state* _____) out of poverty.

I particularly applaud Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio who is introducing a bill this year that would ensure that high-income earners pay their fair share into the system and allow for benefits to increase across the board.

Shame on Sen. Paul. I would like to see him spend a day walking in my shoes (*in my wheelchair*) and then see what he has to say about people on disability!



2) Sample LTE from someone on Disability, approx. 200 words

Senator Rand Paul's recent statement that "over half the people on disability are either anxious or their back hurts" was inappropriate. We should be talking about expanding our Social Security system, rather than mocking those of us on disability as Senator Rand Paul recently did.

I receive Social Security Disability Insurance and depend on the check to scrape by after working my whole life in (*industry or job*_____).

For millions of Americans, disability benefits are the lifeline that keeps us out of poverty.

Social Security Disability Insurance is coverage for workers who have paid into the system and suffer from severe conditions like cancer, kidney failure and multiple sclerosis.

Even then it is not easy to qualify. It took me months of paperwork and doctor examinations to get on disability.

For Sen. Paul to imply that we are just a bunch of freeloaders who are "either anxious for work or their back hurts"* is offensive. Worse yet, he and other politicians are laying the groundwork to dismantle the entire Social Security system.

But that system is at the very foundation of this country. Disability Insurance is an essential part of that system that we need to protect for people like me who depend on it.

* *Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.), remarks in New Hampshire, Jan. 14, 2015*

3) Sample Letter to the Editor from organizational staff

Senator Rand Paul's recent statement that "over half the people on disability are either anxious or their back hurts" was callous to say the least.

Millions of Americans across the country, and thousands in (*this state*), rely on Disability. They are workers who have suffered from severe conditions like cancer, kidney failure, and multiple sclerosis. The average disability benefit is just enough to keep a single person over the federal poverty line.

As (*title, organization*) I have heard first hand how long it takes for someone to get on disability and the seemingly endless doctors examinations, paperwork and phone calls - all while dealing with their illness



or impairment. *(or use an example: I have heard first hand how difficult it is for someone to get on disability. Mrs. X _____)*

So there is no confusion, Social Security Disability Insurance is coverage that workers have earned by working and paying into the system.

But high earners pay into the system at a much lower rate than low-wage workers. That is why I applaud Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio who is introducing a bill this year so that high-income earners will pay their fair share.

The Social Security system is at the very foundation of this country and Disability Insurance is an essential part of that system. Social Security and Disability are the lifelines that keep so many Americans *(people from XX state)* out of poverty.

Rather than mocking those on disability, Sen. Paul should be working to expand the system and protect those whose lives depend on it.

4) Sample LTE from friend or family member

I was upset to hear that Senator Rand Paul recently mocked people on disability by saying “Over half of the people on disability are either anxious or their back hurts...”

My *(sister/friend/...)* is on disability and I have seen the tough times *she/he* has gone through. *She/he* worked as a _____ *(or in X industry)* most of her life. She paid into the system all those years but *(I had to drive her to get examined by doctors X different times or it took X years to get through the process or she has X illness and they rejected her Y times)* before qualifying for Disability.

Her check isn't very big but I don't know how *she/he* could survive without it.

And she is not alone. For thousands of *_(state)_* - residents, disability keeps them out of poverty.

Social Security is a must for the elderly and disabled in this country and Disability Insurance is a critical component of that system.

Instead of working to undermine it as Sen. Paul did, our elected officials need to maintain and expand the Social Security system, of which Disability Insurance is a crucial part.

- *Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.), remarks in New Hampshire, Jan. 14, 2015*