



New Social Security Disability Applications Can Take Years Before a Decision

Written On May 17, 2010 By [Bob Kraft](#)

The waiting time for Social Security disability applications is such a big problem that it is attracting the attention of the national press. Fortunately, Texas is not near the top of the list of states with excessive waiting times, but it still takes far too long to get an initial decision on an application. This is unfair to the applicants, who by definition are out of work.

As Social Security disability lawyers, we have seen many hundreds of our clients become destitute while waiting for a decision on their Social Security disability application. The benefits, once granted, are retroactive, but that does not solve the problem of houses and cars lost due to inability to make payments during the long wait. Here are excerpts from a recent [Associated Press article](#) on this subject:

The Social Security system is so overwhelmed by applications for disability benefits that many people are waiting more than two years for their first payment.

In Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota and other states, the wait can be even longer.

The Social Security commissioner, Michael Astrue, says the delays are unacceptable, particularly for people who have paid payroll taxes for years to support the system and

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now are unable to work because of debilitating medical problems. Astrue has had some success in reducing a case backlog that has plagued the system for years. But a spike in new applications, linked to the economic recession, threatens to swamp the system again.

Claims typically increase in a bad economy because many people who worked despite their disabilities get laid off and apply for benefits. About 3.3 million people are expected to apply for benefits this year. That's 300,000 more than last year and 700,000 more than in 2008.

Nearly two-thirds of those claims will be denied by state agencies overseen by the Social Security Administration. Most of these people will drop their claims. But for those willing to go through an appeals process that can take two years or more, chances are good they eventually will get benefits.

"The most important thing we can do to improve the disability process is to make the right decision as soon as possible," Astrue said at a recent congressional hearing.

"Certainly, I'm not happy with the accuracy of the system, even though it is getting better." His goal is to clear the backlog of appeals hearings by 2013. "It takes longer to fix something than it does to break it," he said.

Nearly 2 million people are waiting to find out if they qualify for Social Security disability benefits. It will be a long wait for most, even if they eventually win their cases.

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