



THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON

July 1, 2009

The Honorable Edward G. Rendell
Governor of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Rendell:

During these difficult economic times, it is critical that we all do what we can to ease the financial burdens on the American public. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Recovery Act) signed into law by President Obama was intended to do just that—create jobs, support state budgets, and ensure that American families continue to receive services to which they are entitled. Millions of Americans depend on their monthly Social Security Disability and Supplemental Security Income checks. These Americans in turn rely on the system that determines and processes eligibility for these vital programs.

As you know, the federally-funded State disability determination services (DDS) play a crucial role in determining benefit eligibility for federal disability programs. I am very concerned that some States are imposing hiring restrictions or furloughs on the DDSs. This is not only unsound but it also goes against the spirit of the Recovery Act which included funding explicitly intended to reduce the Social Security disability backlogs and assist Americans with disabilities in this difficult economic time.

I urge you, as the Chair of the National Governors Association, to convince the Governors to exempt the DDSs from any furloughs, hiring restrictions, or other budget cuts. While I understand that States must make difficult choices to balance their budgets, applying State-wide budget cuts to the DDSs would not help state budgets because DDS operations, as well as disability benefits, are fully funded by the Federal Government.

In fact, DDS cuts would negatively affect a State's economy by forcing the Federal Government to reduce funding to states for DDS administrative costs. Continuous employment of federally-funded DDS employees helps to reduce State unemployment, provides State tax revenues, and assures a steady cash stream into State economies.

More importantly, DDS cuts would delay monthly benefits and health care coverage to disabled Americans and their families. A speedy determination process has direct benefits for state budgets: the faster the DDS can approve claims for benefits, the sooner many applicants move from State to Federal support and medical coverage.

This year the Social Security Administration (SSA) expects to provide \$2 billion in Federal funding to States for the operation of the DDSs. In addition, it pays \$11 billion each month in disability benefits to over 12 million citizens across the nation. If every State nationwide furloughed its DDS employees, each furlough day would reduce Federal administrative funds paid to the States by about \$8 million, and delay over 15,000 disability decisions and \$4 million in benefit payments.

During a time when so many people are struggling, the Federal and State governments must work together to ensure we are doing what we can to help American families. I would appreciate your support on this issue as it benefits the millions of Americans we represent as well as State economies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joe Biden", with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

Joseph R. Biden, Jr.