

115TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. R. 7146

To amend title VII of the Social Security Act to establish a procedure to close or reduce access to field offices, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 16, 2018

Ms. MOORE introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Ways and Means

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## A BILL

To amend title VII of the Social Security Act to establish a procedure to close or reduce access to field offices, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Maintain Access to  
5 Vital Social Security Services Act of 2018”.

6 **SEC. 2. FIELD OFFICES.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—Title VII of the Social Security  
8 Act (42 U.S.C. 701 et seq.) is amended by adding at the  
9 end the following:

1 **“SEC. 714. FIELD OFFICES.**

2 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Commissioner shall operate  
3 a sufficient number of field offices and employ an ade-  
4 quate number of personnel at each field office to—

5 “(1) provide wide-ranging, convenient, and ac-  
6 cessible services to the public;

7 “(2) meet current and projected workloads, tak-  
8 ing into account any anticipated demographic shifts  
9 in the geographic area served by each field office;  
10 and

11 “(3) minimize wait-times at each field office.

12 “(b) PROCEDURE TO CLOSE OR REDUCE ACCESS TO  
13 A FIELD OFFICE.—

14 “(1) IN GENERAL.—

15 “(A) REQUIREMENT TO FOLLOW PROCE-  
16 DURE.—The Commissioner may not take any  
17 action described in subparagraph (B) with re-  
18 spect to a field office except in accordance with  
19 this subsection.

20 “(B) COVERED ACTIONS.—The actions de-  
21 scribed in this subparagraph with respect to a  
22 field office are the following:

23 “(i) Closing the field office for a pe-  
24 riod of more than 60 days.

25 “(ii) Ending, or electing not to renew,  
26 a lease for any field office.

1           “(iii) Consolidating the field office  
2           with one or more other field offices.

3           “(iv) Reassigning personnel of the  
4           field office to one or more other field of-  
5           fices.

6           “(v) Any other action that would re-  
7           sult in the field office reducing face-to-face  
8           services to the public.

9           “(2) NOTIFICATION OF ANTICIPATED ACTION.—

10           “(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90  
11           days before the date on which the Commis-  
12           sioner intends any action described in para-  
13           graph (1)(B) with respect to a field office to  
14           take effect, the Commissioner shall promulgate  
15           a public notification of such action that includes  
16           the following information:

17           “(i) An identification of the field of-  
18           fice.

19           “(ii) The date on which such action is  
20           intended to take effect.

21           “(iii) The reasons for taking such ac-  
22           tion, including, if applicable, the reasons  
23           for rejecting any available alternative ac-  
24           tions such as relocation of the field office.

1           “(iv) The date, time, and location of  
2           the public hearings to be held pursuant to  
3           paragraph (3).

4           “(v) Any alternative means of receiv-  
5           ing assistance related to social security  
6           which may be used by individuals served by  
7           the field office.

8           “(vi) Contact information, including  
9           by phone and Internet, by which individ-  
10          uals may inquire for more information re-  
11          lated to such action.

12          In promulgating a notification under this para-  
13          graph, the Commissioner shall post such notifi-  
14          cation at the affected field office and other  
15          nearby field offices, mail such notification to  
16          residents in the area served by such field of-  
17          fices, publish such notification in newspapers  
18          printed in such area, or take such other actions  
19          as the Commissioner determines to be nec-  
20          essary.

21          “(B) CONGRESSIONAL NOTIFICATION.—As  
22          soon as practicable and not later than 90 days  
23          before the date on which the Commissioner in-  
24          tends any action described in paragraph (1)(B)  
25          with respect to a field office to take effect, the

1 Commissioner shall provide written notification  
2 to each member of Congress and Senator whose  
3 constituents are served by such field office.

4 “(3) OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT.—

5 “(A) PUBLIC HEARING.—Not earlier than  
6 30 days and not later than 60 days after a noti-  
7 fication is published under paragraph (2) with  
8 respect to any action described in paragraph  
9 (1)(B) with respect to a field office, the Com-  
10 missioner shall hold not fewer than two public  
11 hearings in the geographic area served by the  
12 field office, at which the Commissioner shall—

13 “(i) present the reasons for taking  
14 such action, including the criteria used to  
15 select the field office for such action and,  
16 if applicable, the reasons for rejecting any  
17 available alternative actions such as reloca-  
18 tion of the field office;

19 “(ii) address whether impacts on vul-  
20 nerable populations, such as the elderly  
21 population, the disabled population, and  
22 those with language proficiency or mobility  
23 challenges, were considered; and

1           “(iii) provide an opportunity for pub-  
2           lic comment, including an opportunity to  
3           recommend alternatives to such action.

4           “(B) SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN COM-  
5           MENTS.—The Commissioner shall accept writ-  
6           ten comments from the public relating to such  
7           action during the period described in subpara-  
8           graph (A), which shall be posted on the website  
9           of the Social Security Administration.

10          “(4) PUBLIC REPORT ON HEARING.—Not later  
11          than 15 days before the date on which any action  
12          described in paragraph (1)(B) with respect to a field  
13          office takes effect, the Commissioner shall promi-  
14          nently publish on the website of the Social Security  
15          Administration a written report that describes the  
16          action the Commissioner intends to take with re-  
17          spect to the field office after giving full consideration  
18          to any public comments received during the period  
19          described in paragraph (3)(A). Such report shall in-  
20          clude a response by the Commissioner, to the extent  
21          the Commissioner determines to be practicable, to  
22          each unique written comment received during such  
23          period. Not later than 3 days after such report has  
24          been published, the Commissioner shall notify each  
25          person who submitted written comments under para-

1 graph (3)(B). The Commissioner shall submit a copy  
2 of such report to the Committees on Appropriations  
3 of the House of Representatives and the Senate, the  
4 Committee on Ways and Means of the House of  
5 Representatives, and the Committee on Finance of  
6 the Senate.

7 “(5) APPROVAL BY INSPECTOR GENERAL OF  
8 THE SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION.—No action  
9 described in paragraph (1)(B) may go into effect  
10 until the Inspector General of the Social Security  
11 Administration has determined that the Commis-  
12 sioner substantially and procedurally complied with  
13 all applicable laws, regulations, and guidelines with  
14 respect to such action.”

15 (b) MORATORIUM.—The Commissioner may not take  
16 any action described in section 714(b)(1)(B) of the Social  
17 Security Act (42 U.S.C. 914(b)(1)(B)) with respect to a  
18 field office until the date that is 180 days after the date  
19 on which the Inspector General of the Social Security Ad-  
20 ministration determines that the amendments made by  
21 subsection (a) have been fully implemented by the Social  
22 Security Administration, except that in the case of such  
23 an action related to health and safety, such action may  
24 take effect for a period not to exceed 30 days unless the

1 Commissioner provides public notice explaining the need  
2 to extend such period.

3 **SEC. 3. ANNUAL BUDGET.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 704(b)(1)(B) of the So-  
5 cial Security Act (42 U.S.C. 904(b)(1)(B)) is amended by  
6 striking “subparagraph (A)” and all that follows through  
7 the end and inserting the following: “subparagraph (A)—  
8 “(i) an itemization of the amount of funds required  
9 by the Social Security Administration for the fiscal year  
10 covered by the budget to support efforts to combat fraud  
11 committed by applicants and beneficiaries; and

12 “(ii) a list of any field offices with respect to which  
13 the Social Security Administration intends to take any ac-  
14 tion described in section 714(b)(1)(B) during the fiscal  
15 year covered by the budget.”.

16 (b) DISPLAY ON WEBSITE.—Section 704(b)(1) of the  
17 Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 904(b)(1)) is amended by  
18 adding at the end the following:

19 “(C) Not later than 7 days after the submission of  
20 an annual budget prepared pursuant to subparagraph (A),  
21 the Commissioner shall make available on the website of  
22 the Social Security Administration the information de-  
23 scribed in clause (ii) of subparagraph (B).”.

1 **SEC. 4. RECOMMENDATIONS OF SOCIAL SECURITY ADVI-**  
2 **SORY BOARD.**

3 Section 703(b)(4) of title VII of the Social Security  
4 Act (42 U.S.C. 903(b)(4)) is amended by striking “public”  
5 and inserting “public, taking into account the impact of  
6 closing field offices on the quality of service to individuals  
7 with disabilities or language barriers or other vulnerable  
8 populations”.

9 **SEC. 5. REPORT TO CONGRESS.**

10 Not later than 180 days after the date of the enact-  
11 ment of this Act, the Commissioner shall submit to the  
12 Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Rep-  
13 resentatives and the Committee on Finance of the Senate  
14 a report that—

15 (1) includes a list of all field offices closed dur-  
16 ing the 5-year period ending on the date of enact-  
17 ment of this Act, the reason for each such closure,  
18 and any impacts of each such closure on wait-times  
19 and staffing at nearby affected field offices; and

20 (2) describes a plan—

21 (A) to ensure that field offices are receiv-  
22 ing sufficient resources to maintain at least the  
23 level of constituent services provided in the pre-  
24 vious fiscal year; and

25 (B) to adequately address the increasing  
26 number of individuals projected to use field of-

1 fices during the 10-year period beginning on the  
2 date of enactment of this Act.

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