



### **Labor Management Conference Call with No Answers**

At the labor management conference call today, there was little information. Really, the only clear information was that telework is being expanded for Regional Offices and Headquarters. **It was not lost on the union leaders on the call that leadership is located in the locations with expanded telework.**

SSA leaders did not expand telework for those of us in hearing offices and in field offices who come in direct contact with the public.

No actual decision makers, like Deputy Commissioner Gruber, were present.

I asked which hearing offices have been closed; they weren't really sure. I asked how many have requested and received WAHQ; they didn't know. I asked if they were exploring the option of phone hearings; they didn't know. I asked how they were documenting COVID-19 exposure in the workplace; they didn't know.

Union leaders pointed out serious problems related to those of us who have household members with underlying conditions more at risk for COVID-19. There is no option to take WAHQ to ensure those household members are not exposed because of us. Elder care issues were also brought up. Again, no answers.

### **New York Times Article**

Our concerns about the lack of SSA leadership during this pandemic were reported in [The New York Times](#) today. I was quoted as saying, **“We have called for the pause button to be hit because of the failure of leadership,” Judge Melissa McIntosh, the president of the association, said in an interview on Monday. “The agency has not taken precautions to ensure the safety of its public servants.”**

### **Government Executive Article**

We are also featured in [Government Executive](#), “**We can’t understand why Social Security officials are blatantly ignoring public health guidance,**” AALJ President Melissa McIntosh said. “Let’s always remember that many claimants in our hearing rooms and offices are senior citizens and report they have compromised immunity. They could be particularly at risk for the coronavirus.”

### **Work at Home By Quarantine (WAHQ)**

Today, I did receive clarification from Deputy Commissioner James Julian on how this policy (which seems to relentlessly avoid any expansion of telework) actually works.

If you are on WAHQ for an underlying medical condition, you will not be required to report to the office to conduct hearings. If you are on WAHQ because your child's school is closed, you will be required to return to the office to conduct hearings.

Please message updates related to office closures, reported COVID-19 exposure, changes in your ability to postpone hearings, staff being directed to contact claimants to see if they want a phone hearing, etc to [AALJquestions@gmail.com](mailto:AALJquestions@gmail.com). We need to track this information.

I provided the [AALJ press release](#) calling for hearing cancellations to Commissioner Saul, Deputy Commissioner Gruber, Judge Nagle, Deputy Dillon and every RCALJ today.

The AALJ board unanimously voted on the following resolution:  
**Consistent with municipal, state and federal courts, SSA should immediately cancel all hearings nationwide for the next two weeks and be prepared to cancel for up to four weeks to stop the spread of COVID-19 and protect the American public.**

I have received no response. As we receive information, we will report it.

Melissa McIntosh  
AALJ President

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