



## **America’s Disability Judges Say SSA is Trying to Take Down Union During Pandemic Crisis**

WASHINGTON — April 6, 2020 — When Americans are pulling together through a time compared to World War II, the Social Security Administration (SSA) is continuing to bargain in bad faith in its attempt to quickly eliminate the disability judges union, says the [Association of Administrative Law Judges](#) (AALJ).

For over a year AALJ and SSA have been trying to reach a new agreement for the 1,200 administrative law judges who preside in disability hearings in 163 offices across the U.S.

In June of 2019 the parties were deadlocked and in October SSA sent the dispute to the Federal Service Impasses Panel. The panel has yet to rule on nine of the articles in dispute, yet the SSA is refusing to extend its arbitrary deadline for voting on the proposed contract in early May.

Judge Melissa McIntosh, the president of the association, says, “Social Security Administration Commissioner Andrew Saul, through his Deputy Commissioner David Black and others, is clearly driven to eliminate our union as quickly as possible despite the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis. We believe this push for ratification is in clear violation of the negotiation ground rules and the law, and to do so during a pandemic is shameful. There’s no legitimate argument for the agency to say the negotiations are complete until we hear from the Impasses Panel. Only then can the clock begin on the 60 days we have for a ratification vote. SSA needs to focus on meeting the needs of the American public instead of relentlessly pursuing the demise of a judges’ union.”

McIntosh also reiterated that SSA finally made the right decision by closing down all in-person disability hearings after the association spoke up repeatedly to warn about making claimants, their representatives, judges and staff sit in a room in close proximity as COVID-19 was spreading.

“During the pandemic, the administrative law judges are still diligently working to ensure phone hearings occur, but we must recognize there have been some challenges with the connections and recordings. We’re proud of all of our administrative law judges, as well as the outstanding staff who work with us, for the dedication they bring to public service during these difficult days.”

###

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Adam Shapiro

[Adam.Shapiro@ASPR.bz](mailto:Adam.Shapiro@ASPR.bz)

202-427-3603