



Leadership Council
of Aging Organizations

Max Richtman, Chair

March 2, 2016

The Honorable Ron Wyden
United States Senate
Washington, D.C., 20510

Dear Senator Wyden:

On behalf of the Leadership Council on Aging Organizations (LCAO), a coalition of 72 national nonprofit organizations concerned with the well-being of America's older population and committed to representing their interests in the policymaking arena, I am writing to express our concerns regarding the nominations of Charles P. Blahous III and Robert D. Reischauer, for second terms as Social Security's public trustees.

Their reappointment would break the long-standing, important practice of appointing individuals to be public trustees for only a single term. We ask you instead to urge the White House to nominate new experts who have never served as public trustees, consistent with the tradition of the public trustees as outside experts who represent the public interest.

Public trustees are intended to act as outside watchdogs, providing Americans increased confidence that their Social Security trust funds are being managed prudently and responsibly. For that reason, it has been the practice to appoint individuals to be public trustees for only a single four-year term, as a way to maintain the outsider, watch-dog quality of the public trustees.

That practice of not reappointing public trustees for more than one term has been broken only one time. Over the strenuous objections of, among others, then Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-IA), and Ranking Member Max Baucus (D-MT), President George W. Bush, using his power to make recess appointments to avoid confirmation, appointed Dr. John Palmer and Dr. Thomas Saving to second terms in 2006.

At the time, Senator Grassley explained his well-reasoned concern, "This is a small board, and every member carries a lot of weight," adding, "It's important to have new people every four years to represent the taxpaying public's perspective on challenges facing two of the most successful government programs in history."

Similarly, Senator Baucus said, "Never in the history of the public trustees have appointees served more than one term, and that's for good reason. Fresh thinking and new ideas are critical to the proper assessment and administration of the Social Security and Medicare programs."

On behalf of all LCAO member organizations, I urge the Finance Committee to only confirm new experts for these public trustee positions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Max Richtman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Max Richtman
Chair, Leadership Council of Aging Organizations