



**JULY 2012**

## **WORK INCENTIVES, PLANNING AND ASSISTANCE (WIPA) PROGRAM**

- **Reauthorize the WIPA program and support H.R. 6061**
- **In the interim, write the SSA Commissioner urging him to take administrative action to extend the WIPA program**

### **BACKGROUND**

The Work Incentives, Planning and Assistance (WIPA) program was created by the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act. WIPA provides vital information to individuals with disabilities regarding their public benefits, along with advocacy and information that allow them to go to work and increase their self-sufficiency. The cost of the WIPA program is approximately \$375 per individual served, which is greatly offset by the extensive long-term savings in Social Security funds.

- The benefits counseling infrastructure that has been built over the past decade has become a critical component in assisting individuals to become part of the general workforce.
- If the WIPA program is eliminated, people with disabilities will have no alternative place to turn for benefits counseling.
- Loss of the WIPA program would also likely adversely impact SSA's research efforts aimed at implementing a 2:1 offset benefit for SSDI beneficiaries, similar to what SSI recipients get.

The Senate Report accompanying the FY 2013 Labor/HHS/Education/Related Agencies appropriations bill strongly encourages SSA to use fiscal year 2012 funds, and the broad authority provided in annual appropriations language, to continue these programs. Specifically, the Committee encourages SSA to extend current WIPA grants as soon as possible for a short period of time, up to 1 year, to prevent any disruption in services. If there are subsequent changes to the programs, through reauthorization or otherwise, this would give the Agency ample time to run a new competition and make new awards without unnecessarily creating a gap in services. In addition, the Committee recommendation for fiscal year 2013 includes \$23,000,000 for WIPA.

On June 29, 2012, Congressman Becerra introduced H.R. 6061, the "WIPA and PABSS Continuation of Services Act of 2012" which would reauthorize the WIPA and PABSS programs.

### **RECOMMENDED ACTION**

- Support H.R. 6061, a bill reauthorizing the WIPA program.
- In the interim, write SSA Commissioner Astrue encouraging him to extend current WIPA grants as soon as possible for a short period of time, up to one year, to prevent any disruption in services.

### **CONTACT**

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