# POSITION DESCRIPTION

**Commissioner, social security administration**

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| **OVERVIEW** | |
| Senate Committee | Finance |
| Agency Mission | To deliver Social Security services that meet the changing needs of the public, assign Social Security numbers to U.S. citizens, maintain earnings records for workers under their Social Security numbers and administer the Supplemental Security Income Program |
| Position Overview | The commissioner of the Social Security Administration is responsible for the exercise of all powers and discharge of all duties of the agency, including authority and control over all personnel and programmatic activities of the agency. The commissioner shall consult with the secretary of Health and Human Services on an ongoing basis to ensure the coordination of the programs administered by the Social Security Administration as described in section 701 of the Social Security Act, with the programs administered by the secretary under titles XVIII (Medicare) and XIX (Medicaid) of this act; and that adequate information concerning benefits under Titles XVIII and XIX is available to the public. |
| Compensation | Level I $199,700 (5 U.S.C. § 5312)[[1]](#endnote-1) |
| Position Reports to | Independent agency |
| **RESPONSIBILITIES** | |
| Management Scope | The Social Security Administration has a total budget authority of $12.2 billion and a workforce of approximately 63,000 employees worldwide. SSA is widespread with 1,400 field offices. |
| Primary Responsibilities | * Manages the agency; oversees the complex administration of significant program payments * Works with oversight committees to deliver mandated reports including annual performance reports, budget plans and the agency’s strategic plan (every four years); coordinates the release of the annual report on the financial health of the Social Security Trust Funds with the Social Security Board of Trustees * Serves as the public face of the Social Security program; communicate with multiple stakeholders, including other agencies and advocacy groups * Charts a clear path for the agency’s future to ensure the efficient and effective use of taxpayer dollars |
| Strategic Goals and Priorities | [Depends on the policy priorities of the administration] |
| **REQUIREMENTS AND COMPETENCIES** | |
| Requirements | * Knowledge of Social Security policy issues * Experience managing a large organization and budget * Understanding of data and analytics to be able to forecast the impact of proposed policy changes * Prior government experience and commitment to public service (preferred) |
| Competencies | * Process orientation and customer service mindset to ensure the Social Security Administration’s work to get payments to intended recipients is carried out efficiently and effectively * Strong interpersonal and communication skills to be able to work with internal and external stakeholders at all levels (including employees union) and to communicate clearly to the agency’s customers * Ability to think analytically and strategically to ensure the efficiency of the agency’s operations, assuring the effective use of taxpayer dollars * Ability to be open and transparent, and maintain exposure; this is a public-facing role with significant media exposure as well as oversight * Ability to negotiate and reach a compromise * High level of integrity * Ability to create an innovative workplace to improve program effectiveness * Energy for frequent amount of travel |
| **PAST APPOINTEES** | |
| Carolyn W. Colvin (February 2013 – 2017): Special Assistant to the Secretary, Maryland Department of Transportation; Chief Executive Officer, Amerigroup Community Care; Director, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services | |
| Michael J. Astrue (February 2007 – February 2013): General Counsel, Department of Health and Human Services; General Counsel, Biogen; Chief Executive Officer, Transkaryotic Therapies, Inc. | |
| Linda S. McMahon (Acting, January 2007 – February 2007): Deputy Commissioner for Operations, Social Security Administration; Regional Commissioner, San Francisco Region, Social Security Administration; Director, California Department of Social Services; Associate Commissioner for Family Assistance, Social Security Administration | |
| Jo Anne B. Barnhart (November 2001 – January 2007): Member, Social Security Advisory Board; Assistant Secretary for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services; Staff Director, Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs; Associate Commissioner for Family Assistance, Social Security Administration | |

# Endnotes

This position description was created with the help of Heidrick & Struggles, a global executive search firm.

1. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (Public Law 115-31, May 5, 2017), contains a provision that continues the freeze on the payable pay rates for certain senior political officials at 2013 levels during calendar year 2017. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)