

SSD rubber-stamping scandal rocks SSA

Congressional investigators recently determined that approximately 200 administrative judges have been approving a far higher rate of applications for certain federal benefits than they seemingly should be. Specifically, investigators insist that these judges are essentially “rubber-stamping” applications for Social Security Disability benefits that they are charged with overseeing. While several targeted judges are defending their approaches to their work, the rubber-stamping claims have erupted into scandal at the Social Security Administration.

At a congressional hearing held earlier this month, numerous administrative law judges defended their approach as well within the bounds of the law. One judge, who opted to approve a staggering 99 percent of the applications he oversaw from 2005 to 2013 told congressional investigators that, “I’ve seen their ailments, I’ve seen their pain, right in front of me.”

This scandal raises an interesting question. If a judge happens to oversee a seemingly disproportionate number of cases in which SSD applicants have legitimate claims, why shouldn’t he or she approve those claims when appropriate? It is important to ensure that judges are deciding cases fairly and are not awarding benefits to those who do not qualify for them. But it is also important to ensure that qualified applicants receive their benefits regardless of which judges decide their claims.

It is disconcerting to think that some administrative law judges may react to this scandal by potentially denying legitimate claims simply because they fear being labeled as professionals who rubber-stamp cases. Hopefully the ultimate resolution of this scandal will be far more fair and

productive than that scenario would be.

Source: Boston Herald, "[Report: Social Security judges rubber-stamp claims](#)," □ June 10, 2014