

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION'S GUN GRAB MUST STOP

Guest column submitted by U.S. Senator Mike Crapo

The Administration is stepping up efforts to restrict Second Amendment rights. There have been a number of initiatives to restrict expression of Second Amendment rights. This includes U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs efforts to label our nation's returning service members as "mentally defective" solely on the basis that they have an appointed fiduciary to help them with their benefits. It is clear this Administration is determined to deprive American citizens of their constitutional rights—even the rights of those who took an oath to put their lives at risk to uphold the Constitution. I have also written about a U.S. Department of Justice-led initiative, known as Operation Choke Point, through which the Administration has undercut the ability of firearms and ammunition businesses to access banking services. Now, reports have surfaced that the Administration is planning to restrict the Second Amendment rights of certain Social Security beneficiaries. Current attacks on Social Security beneficiaries and our returning veterans is as outrageous as it is illegal.

News reports indicate that the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA) is preparing to provide the names of Social Security beneficiaries who utilize the representative payee system within the program and have a designated "payee" to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS)—a database used to prevent gun sales to felons, drug addicts, illegal and unlawful immigrants and others. If an individual is reported to the NICS, they are instantly prohibited from purchasing a firearm from a Federal Firearm Licensee.

If finalized, the unprecedented move by the Administration will arbitrarily deny millions of Americans their Second Amendment rights. Millions of seniors and people with disabilities rely on representative payees, who assist with financial management and meeting other needs. According to a U.S. Government Accountability Office report, more than 8 million individuals had a representative payee in 2013. SSA's intentions to report beneficiaries to NICS unjustly judges them to be unfit to maintain their Second Amendment Rights.

I led a letter, signed by 26 senators including fellow Idaho Senator Jim Risch, to the Acting Commissioner of the SSA demanding the suspension of plans to report old-age and disability benefit recipients in Social Security programs to NICS and to provide a detailed report on the basis for SSA's intention to develop such a plan.

In the letter, we reject the Administration's improper assumption that individuals are a danger to themselves or society merely because they participate in SSA's representative payee system. Old age or a disability does not make someone a threat to society, and having a representative payee is not grounds to revoke constitutional rights.

Equally alarming is the lack of an established appeals process to enable the removal of names from the system once entered. The Administration's lack of regard for due process is unacceptable.

This overreach by the Administration is a direct attack on our Second Amendment right to bear arms. The Social Security Administration must cease and desist.