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# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

March 5, 2018

Ms. Gale Stallworth Stone  
Acting Inspector General  
Social Security Administration  
6401 Security Boulevard, 2-ME-5  
Baltimore, MD 21235

Dear Acting Inspector General Stallworth Stone,

I am writing regarding the anticipated closing of the "Mitchell St." Social Security Administration (SSA) Field Office at 1710 S. 7<sup>th</sup> St. Ste. 200, Milwaukee, WI 53204.

My office was first notified that the Mitchell St. Field Office would be closing on January 9, 2018. It was explained to my staff that the current office location had numerous health and safety concerns which necessitated closing the office. I have been reassured that funding is not the dominant reason for closing this office and that the SSA remains committed to serving the predominantly Hispanic population on the near Southside of Milwaukee.

As noted in SSA policies and procedures for closing and consolidating field offices, "At least 180 days prior to the *proposed consolidation* date, we will notify the public about any field office consolidation proposal and include a 30 day comment period." As stated above my office was first notified on January 9, 2018, less than two months prior to the *anticipated consolidation*. Based on information received from SSA and the General Services Administration (GSA), SSA began the process of looking for an alternative site in late 2015; over two years ago. Per the above requirements, SSA had both the ability and the opportunity to notify my office and the public at large of its anticipated actions. Instead, it chose to bypass its own procedures by providing my constituents and me with less than 60 days' notice of a completed decision. According to SSA and GSA, at the Mitchell St. Office, the SSA had the option to lease its existing space through 2022. However, SSA has already exercised its option to terminate the lease with 120 days notice. These actions violate the intent of Congress by ignoring the mandate to allow for public comment and to provide notice prior to a final decision.

Additionally, as noted in SSA office closing and consolidation procedures, "There are times when we have to close an office for health and safety reasons, renovations or space issues, E.g. natural disaster, building fire, eviction based on bankruptcy of building owner, etc. SSA will not obtain public input for those situations." Alderman Perez and

City of Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett have reviewed data both on local crime as well as complaints about the building. None of the data reviewed by the City of Milwaukee points to problems that impact health and safety to an extent that would allow SSA to bypass the intent of Congress to provide notice and opportunity for public input. Every other SSA office location in The City of Milwaukee had more police calls than the Mitchell Street Field Office. The City of Milwaukee has no record of the extensive list of accessibility complaints referenced by SSA. The City of Milwaukee routinely works with private building owners to correct these types of deficiencies, my office can attest to their effectiveness in this regard. Further, all the examples listed as cause for exemption point to serious events which negated the continued viability of the space for the intended purpose of the SSA. The health and safety concerns as discussed by SSA do not rise to a level sufficient to bypass Congressional intent.

The Hispanic community on Milwaukee's Southside is one of the fastest growing and most economically challenged communities in Milwaukee. This closure not only leaves the Southside without a SSA office, but also disenfranchises the largest Hispanic Community in the State of Wisconsin.

It is clear to me that the process as prescribed by SSA's own requirements was subverted and Congressional intent was ignored. I am requesting an investigation by the Office of Inspector General to determine if/what missteps were made by SSA during this process. If missteps were made, I am inquiring what steps should be taken both to mitigate the opportunity for future error and to mitigate any effects on Wisconsin's largest Hispanic community, the near Southside of Milwaukee and the Southshore Suburbs. I am also requesting that while OIG investigates these concerns, the SSA cease any and all efforts to complete the anticipated consolidation of the Mitchell St. Office. I look forward to working together to ensure that SSA is fully committed to serving the constituents of Wisconsin's 4<sup>th</sup> Congressional District.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gwen Moore". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and "M".

Gwen Moore  
Member of Congress

GM/DH