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Jammed Up in the Social Security Disability Process? Here Are Steps You Can Take

Social Security disability cases are seriously jammed up. A recent investigation by the *San Francisco Chronicle* found that “the backlog of cases pending a hearing stands at about 1.1 million, up from 700,000 in 2010. [And] the average wait time is 596 days or 19½ months, up from 545 days [a year ago] and only 353 days in 2012.” Tragically, the Social Security’s inspector general says that in 2016 7,400 people died while waiting for a hearing. If you are waiting for a Social Security disability

hearing there are some steps you can take to speed up the process.

Step 1: Start the process of filing for benefits immediately. Although Social Security only pays benefits for long term disabilities, you do not have to wait to file for benefits if your disabling condition is expected to last 12 months or longer. At our law firm we see many people who put off filing for disability benefits because they were hoping their medical situation would improve. “If you get better you can always return to work,” Attorney Tim Cuddigan points out. “The wait is bad even if you file quickly, but life can be much more difficult if you wait and your financial situation takes a turn for the worse.”

Step 2: Hire a professional to represent you. Statistics show that you have a better chance at winning benefits if you have a disability lawyer to advocate for you. An experienced law team will make sure your filings are complete, accurate and that you don’t miss critically important deadlines.

Step 3: File your disability denial appeals as soon as you can. Our final tip for speeding up the Social Security disability process would be to complete and mail your paperwork right away at each stage of the disability process. Social Security gives you a maximum of sixty-five days each time you appeal a



To speed up the Social Security disability process complete and mail your paperwork right away at each stage of the disability process.

denial of disability (the deadline at all levels is sixty days and Social Security also gives you an extra five days for mailing your paperwork). If you take the maximum amount of time at each level you will be adding an additional four months to the processing time of your disability claim.

Step 4: Request an expedited hearing based on dire need. In some extreme cases your attorney can ask that your hearing date be moved up if you are in a serious financial bind. Maybe you are in danger of losing your home or being evicted from your apartment. Perhaps you cannot pay for needed medical treatments or prescription medications. If so, your disability attorney can make a request to the hearing office director or administrative law judge (if one has been assigned to your case) to speed up the

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Cuddigan Law
10855 West Dodge Road, Suite #101
Omaha, NE 68154
cuddiganlaw.com
402.933.5318

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scheduling of your disability hearing—in effect to allow you to “jump the line”. A dire need request has no effect at the application or reconsideration phases of disability claim, because there is nothing to expedite, no line to jump. It is critically important that your attorney include complete and detailed documentation of your dire need. Because there are a record number of backlogged cases, requests for expedited hearings are also at record levels. Filing a request for an expedited hearing without solid documentation is useless.

Question of the Month: What are the maximum Social Security disability benefits?

The maximum monthly payment for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) for this year is \$2,788, but few beneficiaries will actually receive this amount. The average monthly check will likely be lower. In 2017 the average SSDI check was \$1,171.

For those who qualify for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments the maximum amounts for 2018 are \$750 per month for an eligible individual and \$1,125 for an eligible individual with an eligible spouse.



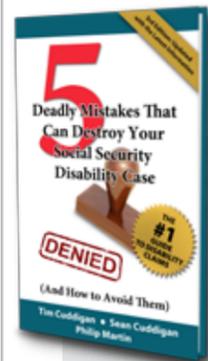
Find-A-Word

S E L D D A W A G E R S H O
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| Bugle | Scabs |
| Bulking | Skimped |
| Canter | Snips |
| Census | Stints |
| Claws | Suspend |
| Clucks | Syrup |
| Dealt | Thaws |
| Debts | Torch |
| Doves | Total |
| Dualism | Trees |
| Dully | Troupe |
| Facing | Unduly |
| Facts | Waddle |
| Geese | Wager |
| Girths | |
| Hairline | |
| Height | |

For the puzzle solution go to cuddiganlaw.com/library/newsletter

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“5 Deadly Mistakes That Can Destroy Your Social Security Disability Case” is the #1 guide to improving the odds of winning a disability case.

For a FREE copy for you or someone you care about call Cuddigan Law at 402.933.5318 or email us at lawteam@cuddiganlaw.com



Comfort Food

From the kitchen of Janet Cuddigan

There may be no better way to beat the winter blahs than with everybody’s favorite sugary, cinnamon-y treat.

Snickerdoodles.

- 2 eggs
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 3/4 cups flour
- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 1/2 cup shortening
- 2 teaspoons cream of tartar
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 cups white sugar
- 2 tablespoons white sugar
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon

Preheat oven to 400 degrees

Mix together butter, shortening, 1 1/2 cups sugar, eggs and vanilla. Blend in flour, cream of tartar, soda and salt. Shape the dough into balls by using rounded spoonfuls.

Mix the 2 tablespoons of sugar and the cinnamon. Roll balls of dough in this mixture. Place dough balls 2 inches apart on ungreased baking sheets.

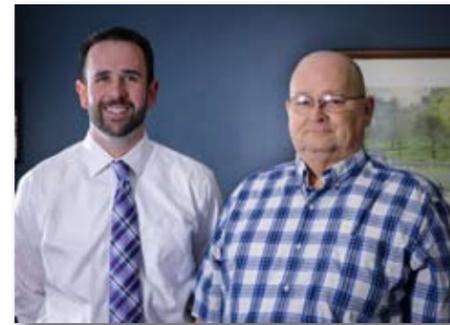
Bake 8 to 10 minutes (or until crispy on the edges and soft in the centers).

Adapted from allrecipes.com.

Winning VA Disability Benefits

One vet’s story

More than 90,000 “Blue Water” Navy veterans served offshore in Vietnam. Many of those sailors were exposed to the deadly herbicide brew known as Agent Orange because their ships pumped in potentially contaminated water which was used for showers and laundry and even distilled for drinking. Under the Agent Orange Act of 1991, the Blue Water vets were declared eligible for compensation, but the VA changed its ruling ten years later.



Attorney Sean Cuddigan and U.S. Navy veteran David Parker

David Parker served in the U.S. Navy off the coast of Vietnam during that war in Southeast Asia. Today David is coping with severe medical issues due to Agent Orange exposure. “I have diabetes with neuropathy and ischemic heart disease which required a pacemaker implant,” David explains. “Those two conditions caused arthritis and other problems.”

After the VA turned down his claim David turned to the VFW and the American Legion for help, but they failed. After more than 12 years of fighting for his rightful benefits, David came to Cuddigan Law. “I figured the only way to get anything done was to come see the professionals,” he said. David hoped for benefits dating back to 2014, but after a two-year battle the VA awarded him benefits back dated to 2003.

Attorney Sean Cuddigan says “The VA threw a lot of obstacles in our path, but David and our team were up to the task. We, the attorneys and staff at Cuddigan Law, are proud that we are able to fight for our military men and women and get them the benefits they have earned through their service.” David put it this way in evaluating the firm’s advocacy: “On a scale of 1 to 10, you [scored] a 17. When I came to Cuddigan Law everything started clicking. They (the VA) started listening.”

For more on how this vet won his benefits and how his case hinged on the actions of a grateful Navy pilot watch David’s short video on the Cuddigan Law website at: <http://www.cuddiganlaw.com/video/winning-va-disability-benefits-one-vet-s-story.cfm>

We’re in your corner.

We value the confidence and trust you have placed with us in the past.

If you or a family member or a friend could use our help now or in the future, please pass along our name.

Cuddigan Law.

Disability law is all we do.



Tim & Sean Cuddigan

Cuddigan Law
10855 West Dodge Road,
Suite #101
Omaha, NE 68154
cuddiganlaw.com
402.933.5318

Are you a disabled veteran?

Before you apply for VA disability benefits call Cuddigan Law at 402.933.5318 or email us at lawteam@cuddiganlaw.com for your FREE copy of our book *The Essential Guide to VA Disability Claims*.

