

Washington, DC -- U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) visited the Northern Broome Senior Center today to highlight The Social Security Customer Service Improvement Act (H.R.5110), legislation cosponsored by Arcuri to strengthen Social Security Administration (SSA) services at local field offices by giving Congress oversight powers to ensure that local seniors get the quality service they deserve at local offices.

“People who have worked their whole lives and paid into Social Security deserve a local office where they can go with questions or complications and receive quality face-to-face service,” **Arcuri said**

. “Social Security is a binding contract this country made with generations of workers – the men and women who built our country and fought its wars. I am proud to support legislation to ensure that local Social Security Offices maintain the highest degree of service and uphold our promise to generations of Americans.”

The Social Security Customer Service Improvement Act (H.R.5110) would allow Congressional oversight over local office operations to preserve critical services for members of the community who need it most.

H.R. 5110 would:

- Require SSA to provide Congress a nonpartisan detailed yearly budget estimate;
The budget estimate would include yearly statistics of the number of cases pending at hearing offices, the rate at which case backlogs are increasing or decreasing, the average length of time it takes for claims to be administered, and staffing level trends at offices over time;
- Prohibit SSA from closing or limiting hours at local offices without providing Congress with at least 6 months notice and thoughtful justifications for closure;
- Require SSA to inform Congress of changes to how it staffs offices at least 3 months before a proposed change could be implemented.

Eleven SSA district offices provide the range of Social Security services for the residents of the 24th congressional district

However, because of federal budget cuts under previous administrations, local Social Security offices are often understaffed, making it difficult for hardworking employees to respond timely to the inquiries of local citizens.

Along with his colleagues, Arcuri fought for increased funding for SSA's administrative operations this year to reverse these harmful cuts. Congress appropriated \$9.781 billion to fund SSA operations for Fiscal Year 2008, representing an over \$600 million increase from the Fiscal Year 2006 funding level.

In the 24th congressional district, SSA pays \$1.5 billion in monthly Social Security benefits each year to nearly 137,000 retirees, workers with disabilities and certain family members, including those of deceased workers. SSA also pays \$102 million in monthly Supplemental Security Income benefits each year to 18,000 people age 65 and older or individuals who are blind or disabled of various ages who have limited assets and income.

The following Representatives have also signed on to H.R.5110 as original cosponsors:, Joe Baca (CA-43), Nancy Boyda (KS-2), Joe Courtney (CT-2), Rosa DeLauro (CT-3), Keith Ellison (MN-5), Mike McIntyre (NC-7), Jerry McNerney (CA-11), Dennis Moore (KS-3) and Jan Schakowsky (IL-9).

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