



**For Immediate Release**  
03/23/2018

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## **New Legislation Protects Beneficiaries of Social Security Disability Benefits**

WASHINGTON – Legislation passed by the U.S. Senate will increase oversight and protection for some of our nation’s most vulnerable citizens. The bill, called the Strengthening Protections for Social Security Beneficiaries Act (H.R. 4547), will increase independent oversight of the Social Security Administration’s Representative Payee Program.

A representative payee is a person who acts as the receiver of Social Security Disability or Supplemental Security Income for a person who is not fully capable of managing their own benefits. Unfortunately, multiple investigations have uncovered representative payees who have stolen or misused funds, exploited, neglected, and even abused the people with disabilities they were supposed to be helping.

“For too long dishonest representative payees have exploited and abused people with disabilities without fear of being discovered,” said the National Disability Rights Network’s (NDRN) Executive Director Curt Decker. “That stops today. We are thrilled to see that Congress has acted to protect the more than eight million Americans who currently have representative payees.”

H.R. 4547 specifically authorizes the nation’s Protection and Advocacy (P&A) system to monitor and investigate how representative payees are administering Social Security funds. P&As are federally mandated organizations that provide legal and other advocacy services to people with disabilities in every U.S. state and territory.

“Congress has recognized the critical role P&As have played for 40 years in keeping our nation’s most vulnerable citizens safe from abuse and neglect in institutions and the community,” continued Decker. “The P&As have the experience, capacity and determination to provide this needed oversight of the representative payee program.”

The House of Representative approved the bill unanimously in February. It now goes to the White House where President Trump is expected to sign it into law”

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*The National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) is the nonprofit membership organization for the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy (P&A) Systems and the Client Assistance Programs (CAP) for individuals with disabilities. Collectively, the Network is the largest provider of legally based advocacy services to people with disabilities in the United States.*