



Nothing about us without us!

January 30, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Majority Leader  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Senate Minority Leader  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

The Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN) urges you to support a Congressional Review Act (CRA) resolution to disapprove the Final Rule issued by the Social Security Administration (SSA) on December 19, 2016, “Implementation of the NICS Improvement Amendments Act of 2007.”<sup>1</sup> This rule would require the Social Security Administration to forward the names of all Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefit recipients who use a representative payee to help manage their benefits due to a mental impairment to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS).

The Autistic Self Advocacy Network is a nationwide 501(c)(3) advocacy organization run by and for autistic people ourselves. ASAN promotes public education and public policies that are aimed at eliminating stigmatizing attitudes and increasing autistic Americans’ access to all aspects of the community.

Prior to the issuance of the Final Rule, the Autistic Self Advocacy Network conveyed its opposition to the rule through a letter to [the Obama Administration](#) and through [the public comment process](#), in addition to [joining in public comments](#) as a member of the Consortium of Citizens with Disabilities Rights Task Force. We – and many other disability rights organizations – opposed the rule for a number of reasons, including:

- The damaging message that may be sent by a SSA policy change, which focused on reporting individuals who receive assistance from representative payees in managing their benefits to the NICS gun database. The current public dialogue is replete with inaccurate stereotyping of people with mental disabilities as violent and dangerous, and there is a real concern that the kind of policy change encompassed by this rule will reinforce those unfounded assumptions.

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<sup>1</sup> 81 Fed. Reg. 91702 (Dec. 19, 2016).

- The absence of any data suggesting that there is any connection between the need for a representative payee to manage one's Social Security disability benefits and a propensity toward gun violence.
- The absence of any meaningful due process protections prior to the SSA's transmittal of names to the NICS database. Although the NICS Improvements Act of 2007 allows agencies to transmit the names of individuals who have been "adjudicated" to lack the capacity to manage their own affairs, SSA's process does not constitute an adjudication and does not include a finding that individuals are broadly unable to manage their own affairs.

Based on similar concerns, the National Council on Disability, an independent federal agency charged with advising the President, Congress, and other federal agencies regarding disability policy, has urged Congress to use the Congressional Review Act to repeal this rule.

We urge Congress to act, through the CRA process, to disapprove this new rule and prevent the damage that it inflicts on the disability community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Samantha Crane". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and a long, sweeping underline.

Samantha Crane, Director of Public Policy  
Autistic Self-Advocacy Network

CC: Senate Judiciary Committee members