

Social Security Administration (SSA): FY2026 Annual Limitation on Administrative Expenses (LAE) Appropriation: In Brief

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Introduction

This report provides an overview of the Social Security Administration’s (SSA’s) annual Limitation on Administrative Expenses (LAE) appropriation for FY2026. It also identifies relevant agency, Administration, congressional, and other resources. Unless otherwise noted, the dollar and percentage changes discussed in the text are based on actual, unrounded amounts.

Background on SSA

SSA is an independent agency in the executive branch headed by the commissioner of Social Security. It is responsible for administering Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI), which are the nation’s primary income support programs for older adults and individuals with disabilities. SSA also supports the administration of a number of non-SSA programs and laws, such as Medicare, and provides and verifies data for a variety of purposes. For more information on SSA, see the following resources:

- CRS Report R47097, *Social Security Administration (SSA): Trends in the Annual Limitation on Administrative Expenses (LAE) Appropriation*, “Administrative Responsibilities.”
- CRS Report R47086, *Social Security Policy Resources for Congressional Offices*.
- SSA, *Annual Statistical Supplement, 2024*, “Social Security (Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance)” and “SSA Resources and Operations,” <https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/supplement/>.

Overview of the Annual LAE Appropriation

Benefit payments for SSA’s programs are considered mandatory spending, which is not controlled by appropriations acts.¹ However, the resources to carry out SSA’s programs—as well as to support the administration of Medicare and other priorities—are generally considered discretionary spending and thus are controlled by appropriations acts. Nearly all of SSA’s administrative expenses are funded by appropriations to its LAE account, and almost all of the funding for the LAE account is provided each year as part of the annual appropriations process.

SSA’s annual LAE appropriation is a discretionary lump-sum appropriation composed of funds from the Social Security and Medicare trust funds for their respective shares of administrative expenses, the general fund for SSI’s share of administrative expenses, and certain user fees. The legislative text of SSA’s annual LAE appropriation typically consists of four paragraphs. The first paragraph provides funding for what this report refers to as the *main LAE*, which funds the base LAE and certain program integrity (PI) activities. The *base LAE*, which is equal to the main LAE less total dedicated PI funding, constitutes the bulk of SSA’s discretionary administrative funding. The second paragraph specifies the amount of the main LAE in the first paragraph that is dedicated to continuing disability reviews, SSI nonmedical redeterminations, and certain other PI activities, known as *dedicated PI funding*.

The third and fourth paragraphs provide additional funding from a portion of the *user fees* collected for SSA’s administration of state supplementary payments (SSPs) under the SSI

¹ See CRS Report R46468, *A Brief Overview of the Congressional Budget Process*.

program and certifications of non-attorney claimant representatives. The amounts in this report differ slightly from the amounts in relevant congressional reports because those reports apply adjustments to SSA user fees based on Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projections of the amount of money that will actually be collected. CBO projections of SSA user fee collections have typically been less than the total amounts authorized in proposals or legislation.

SSA's annual LAE appropriation is traditionally provided under the Related Agencies section of the annual Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) appropriations act. For more information on SSA's annual LAE appropriation and the annual LHHS appropriations act, see the following resources:

- CRS Report R47097, *Social Security Administration (SSA): Trends in the Annual Limitation on Administrative Expenses (LAE) Appropriation*, "Overview of the LAE Account and the Annual LAE Appropriation."
- SSA, *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees, Fiscal Year 2026*, "Budget Overview," <https://www.ssa.gov/budget/>.
- CRS Report R48616, *Status of FY2026 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations: In Brief*.

FY2026 Budget Requests for the Annual LAE

Commissioner of Social Security

Section 704(b)(1) of the Social Security Act requires the commissioner of Social Security to prepare an annual budget for the Administration, which is required to be submitted by the President to Congress, without revision, together with the President's budget.² The commissioner's budget is independent of the President's budget and is designed to provide Congress with information on the amount of funding that the commissioner believes is necessary for SSA to carry out its mission.

The FY2026 commissioner's budget requested \$14.793 billion for the total annual LAE appropriation, an increase of \$494 million (+3.5%) compared to the FY2025 enacted level.³ For more information on the FY2026 commissioner's budget, see the last paragraph of SSA's section of the appendix to the FY2026 President's budget:

- U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB), *Technical Supplement to the 2026 Budget: Appendix, Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 2026*, SSA, "Commissioner's Budget," p. 1042, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/BUDGET-2026-APP/pdf/BUDGET-2026-APP.pdf#page=1048>.

President

The FY2026 President's budget requested \$14.793 billion for the total annual LAE appropriation, an increase of \$494 million (+3.5%) compared to the FY2025 enacted level. The FY2026 total

² 42 U.S.C. §904(b)(1).

³ The dollar and percentage changes for the commissioner's budget are based on rounded amounts. The President's budget does not provide information on the components of the proposed annual LAE appropriation in the commissioner's budget (e.g., the amount of base LAE funding in the commissioner's budget).

included \$12.225 billion in base LAE funding, \$2.397 billion in total dedicated PI funding, and \$171 million in total user fees. For more information, see the resources below:

- OMB, *Technical Supplement to the 2026 Budget: Appendix, Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 2026*, SSA, pp. 1041-1042, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/BUDGET-2026-APP/pdf/BUDGET-2026-APP.pdf#page=1047>.
- SSA, *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees, Fiscal Year 2026*, “Limitation on Administrative Expenses,” pp. 62-68, <https://www.ssa.gov/budget/assets/materials/2026/FY26-JEAC.pdf#page=83>.

FY2026 Congressional Proposals for the Annual LAE

House

The House Appropriations Committee reported its LHHS bill to the House on September 11, 2025 (H.R. 5304, H.Rept. 119-271). The FY2026 House committee bill proposed \$14.793 billion for the total annual LAE appropriation, an increase of \$494 million (+3.5%) compared to the FY2025 enacted level. The FY2026 total included \$12.225 billion in base LAE funding, \$2.397 billion in total dedicated PI funding, and \$171 million in total user fees. For more information, see the resources below:

- LAE section of H.R. 5304, pp. 171-174, <https://www.congress.gov/119/bills/hr5304/BILLS-119hr5304rh.pdf#page=171>.
- H.Rept. 119-271 (amounts reflect CBO adjustments to user fees):
 - LAE section of report write-up, pp. 279-281, <https://www.congress.gov/119/crpt/hrpt271/CRPT-119hrpt271.pdf#page=283>.
 - LAE section of detailed table, pp. 386-387, <https://www.congress.gov/119/crpt/hrpt271/CRPT-119hrpt271.pdf#page=386>.

Senate

The Senate Appropriations Committee reported its LHHS bill to the Senate on July 31, 2025 (S. 2587, S.Rept. 119-55). The FY2026 Senate committee bill proposed \$14.893 billion for the total annual LAE appropriation, an increase of \$594 million (+4.2%) compared to the FY2025 enacted level. The FY2026 total included \$12.325 billion in base LAE funding, \$2.397 billion in total dedicated PI funding, and \$171 million in total user fees. For more information, see the resources below:

- LAE section of S. 2587, pp. 190-194, <https://www.congress.gov/119/bills/s2587/BILLS-119s2587rs.pdf#page=190>.
- S.Rept. 119-55 (amounts reflect CBO adjustments to user fees):
 - LAE section of report write-up, pp. 334-338, <https://www.congress.gov/119/crpt/srpt55/CRPT-119srpt55.pdf#page=334>.
 - LAE section of detailed table, pp. 449-450, <https://www.congress.gov/119/crpt/srpt55/CRPT-119srpt55.pdf#page=449>.

FY2026 Comparison Tables

This section provides data on the FY2026 proposed levels for the annual LAE appropriation (excluding continuing resolutions) and compares them to the FY2025 enacted level.⁴

Table 1 shows the FY2026 proposed levels for the *total* annual LAE appropriation relative to the FY2025 enacted level.

Table 1. Comparison of the Total Annual Limitation on Administrative Expenses (LAE) Appropriation, FY2025-FY2026

In Millions of Nominal Dollars

Total Annual LAE	FY2025 Enacted	FY2026 Commissioner's Budget	FY2026 President's Budget	FY2026 House Committee	FY2026 Senate Committee	FY2026 Enacted
Dollar amount	\$14,299	\$14,793	\$14,793	\$14,793	\$14,893	
Dollar difference relative to FY2025 enacted	—	+\$494	+\$494	+\$494	+\$594	
Percentage change relative to FY2025 enacted	—	+3.5%	+3.5%	+3.5%	+4.2%	

Source: CRS, based on the materials presented in this report.

Notes: The dollar and percentage changes for the commissioner's budget are based on rounded amounts. The dollar and percentage changes for all other columns are based on actual, unrounded amounts. The amounts in this table differ slightly from the amounts in relevant congressional reports because those reports apply adjustments to SSA user fees based on Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projections of the amount of money that will actually be collected. CBO projections of Social Security Administration user fee collections have typically been less than the total amounts authorized in proposals or legislation.

Table 2 shows the FY2026 proposed levels for the *components* of the annual LAE appropriation relative to the FY2025 enacted level. The total annual LAE is equal to the main LAE component *plus* the SSI SSP user fees component *plus* the non-attorney user fees component. The base LAE, total dedicated PI, base PI, and adjustment PI components are labeled “non-add” because they are included in the main LAE component and thus are not added to the total annual LAE. The commissioner's budget is not shown in **Table 2** because the President's budget does not provide information on the components of the proposed annual LAE appropriation in the commissioner's budget.

⁴ On November 12, 2025, the President signed into law the Continuing Appropriations, Agriculture, Legislative Branch, Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Extensions Act, 2026 (P.L. 119-37). The continuing resolution portion of the act (Division A) provided SSA's LAE account with a total funding rate for operations at the FY2025 enacted level through January 30, 2026. For more information, see CRS Report R48765, *Overview of Continuing Appropriations for FY2026 (Division A of P.L. 119-37)*.

Table 2. Comparison of the Components of the Annual Limitation on Administrative Expenses (LAE) Appropriation, FY2025-FY2026

In Thousands of Nominal Dollars

Component	FY2025 Enacted	FY2026 President's Budget	FY2026 House Committee	FY2026 Senate Committee	FY2026 Enacted
<i>Dollar Amount (in Thousands)</i>					
Main LAE	\$14,127,978	\$14,621,978	\$14,621,978	\$14,721,978	
Base LAE (non-add)	\$12,224,978	\$12,224,978	\$12,224,978	\$12,324,978	
Total dedicated PI (non-add)	\$1,903,000	\$2,397,000	\$2,397,000	\$2,397,000	
Base PI (non-add)	\$273,000	\$273,000	\$273,000	\$273,000	
Adjustment PI (non-add)	\$1,630,000	\$2,124,000	\$2,124,000	\$2,124,000	
SSI SSP user fees	\$170,000	\$170,000	\$170,000	\$170,000	
Non-attorney user fees	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	
Total Annual LAE	\$14,298,978	\$14,792,978	\$14,792,978	\$14,892,978	
<i>Dollar Difference Relative to FY2025 Enacted (in Thousands)</i>					
Main LAE	—	+\$494,000	+\$494,000	+\$594,000	
Base LAE (non-add)	—	\$0	\$0	+\$100,000	
Total dedicated PI (non-add)	—	+\$494,000	+\$494,000	+\$494,000	
Base PI (non-add)	—	\$0	\$0	\$0	
Adjustment PI (non-add)	—	+\$494,000	+\$494,000	+\$494,000	
SSI SSP user fees	—	\$0	\$0	\$0	
Non-attorney user fees	—	\$0	\$0	\$0	
Total Annual LAE	—	+\$494,000	+\$494,000	+\$594,000	
<i>Percentage Change Relative to FY2025 Enacted</i>					
Main LAE	—	+3.5%	+3.5%	+4.2%	
Base LAE (non-add)	—	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	
Total dedicated PI (non-add)	—	+26.0%	+26.0%	+26.0%	
Base PI (non-add)	—	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
Adjustment PI (non-add)	—	+30.3%	+30.3%	+30.3%	
SSI SSP user fees	—	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
Non-attorney user fees	—	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
Total Annual LAE	—	+3.5%	+3.5%	+4.2%	

Source: CRS, based on the materials presented in this report.

Notes: The dollar and percentage changes are based on actual, unrounded amounts. Components may not sum to totals due to rounding. “Non-add” amounts are displayed for clarification purposes. These amounts are not added to the totals. The commissioner’s budget is not shown because the President’s budget does not provide information on the components of the proposed annual LAE appropriation in the commissioner’s budget. The amounts in this table differ slightly from the amounts in relevant congressional reports because those reports apply adjustments to Social Security Administration user fees based on Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projections of the amount of money that will actually be collected. CBO projections of SSA user fee collections have typically been less than the total amounts authorized in proposals or legislation.

Historical Tables

Table 3 shows the requested total annual LAE appropriation in the commissioner’s budget and the President’s budget, as well as the enacted total annual LAE appropriation, since FY2009.⁵

Table 3. Requested and Enacted Total Annual Limitation on Administrative Expenses (LAE) Appropriation, FY2009-FY2026

In Millions of Nominal Dollars

Fiscal Year	Commissioner’s Budget	President’s Budget	Enacted
2009	\$10,395	\$10,327	\$10,454
2010	\$11,800	\$11,451	\$11,447
2011	\$13,100	\$12,379	\$11,424
2012	\$12,938	\$12,522	\$11,453
2013	\$12,470	\$11,760	\$11,046
2014	\$12,199	\$11,070	\$11,697
2015	\$10,787	\$12,024	\$11,806
2016	\$12,516	\$12,513	\$12,162
2017	\$13,460	\$13,067	\$12,482
2018	—	\$12,457	\$12,873
2019	\$12,788	\$12,393	\$12,877
2020	\$13,270	\$12,773	\$12,871
2021	\$13,804	\$13,351	\$12,931
2022	\$14,484	\$14,189	\$13,342
2023	\$15,353	\$14,773	\$14,127
2024	\$16,223	\$15,489	\$14,227
2025	\$16,236	\$15,402	\$14,299
2026	\$14,793	\$14,793	

Source: CRS, based on applicable budget requests and annual Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies appropriations acts.

Notes: Amounts reflect new budget authority under the annual LAE appropriation only and include reductions due to sequestration and most rescissions. The FY2018 commissioner’s budget is not shown because the President did not submit it. The amounts for the commissioner’s budget for FY2015 and FY2017 and for the President’s budget for FY2014 are adjusted to exclude certain mandatory and other funding. For information on the adjustment methodology, as well as data for FY1997-FY2008, see CRS Report R47097, *Social Security Administration (SSA): Trends in the Annual Limitation on Administrative Expenses (LAE) Appropriation*.

Table 4 shows the enacted annual LAE appropriation, by component, since FY2009.⁶ As noted earlier, the total annual LAE is equal to the main LAE component *plus* the SSI SSP user fees component *plus* the non-attorney user fees component. The base LAE, total dedicated PI, base PI,

⁵ **Table 3** starts with FY2009 to match the period used in **Table 4**.

⁶ **Table 4** starts with FY2009 because dedicated PI funding has been consistently provided in the annual LAE appropriation each fiscal year since FY2009. Dedicated PI funding was first provided in the annual LAE appropriation for FY1996-FY2002. No dedicated PI funding was provided in the annual LAE appropriation for FY2003-FY2008.

and adjustment PI components are labeled “non-add” because they are included in the main LAE component and thus are not added to the total annual LAE.

Table 4. Enacted Annual Limitation on Administrative Expenses (LAE) Appropriation, by Component, FY2009-FY2025

In Millions of Nominal Dollars

Component	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018
Main LAE	\$10,307.5	\$11,285.5	\$11,238.0	\$11,291.6	\$10,884.2	\$11,525.0	\$11,680.9	\$12,024.9	\$12,357.9	\$12,753.9
Base LAE (non-add)	\$9,803.5	\$10,527.5	\$10,481.5	\$10,535.5	\$10,141.6	\$10,328.0	\$10,284.9	\$10,598.9	\$10,538.9	\$11,018.9
Total dedicated PI (non-add)	\$504.0	\$758.0	\$756.5	\$756.1	\$742.6	\$1,197.0	\$1,396.0	\$1,426.0	\$1,819.0	\$1,735.0
<i>Base PI (non-add)</i>	\$264.0	\$273.0	\$272.5	\$273.5	\$272.0	\$273.0	\$273.0	\$273.0	\$273.0	\$273.0
<i>Adjustment PI (non-add)</i>	\$240.0	\$485.0	\$484.0	\$482.6	\$470.6	\$924.0	\$1,123.0	\$1,153.0	\$1,546.0	\$1,462.0
SSI SSP user fees	\$145.0	\$160.0	\$185.6	\$160.7	\$160.4	\$171.0	\$124.0	\$136.0	\$123.0	\$118.0
Non-attorney user fees	\$1.0	\$1.0	\$0.0	\$1.0	\$0.9	\$1.0	\$1.0	\$1.0	\$1.0	\$1.0
Total Annual LAE	\$10,453.5	\$11,446.5	\$11,423.6	\$11,453.3	\$11,045.6	\$11,697.0	\$11,805.9	\$12,161.9	\$12,481.9	\$12,872.9
Component	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025			
Main LAE	\$12,741.9	\$12,739.9	\$12,794.9	\$13,202.9	\$13,986.0	\$14,076.0	\$14,128.0			
Base LAE (non-add)	\$11,058.9	\$11,157.9	\$11,219.9	\$11,494.9	\$12,202.0	\$12,225.0	\$12,225.0			
Total dedicated PI (non-add)	\$1,683.0	\$1,582.0	\$1,575.0	\$1,708.0	\$1,784.0	\$1,851.0	\$1,903.0			
<i>Base PI (non-add)</i>	\$273.0	\$273.0	\$273.0	\$273.0	\$273.0	\$273.0	\$273.0			
<i>Adjustment PI (non-add)</i>	\$1,410.0	\$1,309.0	\$1,302.0	\$1,435.0	\$1,511.0	\$1,578.0	\$1,630.0			
SSI SSP user fees	\$134.0	\$130.0	\$135.0	\$138.0	\$140.0	\$150.0	\$170.0			
Non-attorney user fees	\$1.0	\$1.0	\$1.0	\$1.0	\$1.0	\$1.0	\$1.0			
Total Annual LAE	\$12,876.9	\$12,870.9	\$12,930.9	\$13,341.9	\$14,127.0	\$14,227.0	\$14,299.0			

Source: CRS, based on applicable annual Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) appropriations acts and annual SSA operating plans.

Notes: Components may not sum to totals due to rounding. Amounts reflect new budget authority under the annual LAE appropriation only and include reductions due to sequestration and most rescissions. Amounts for certain components are adjusted from those in applicable annual LHHS appropriations acts and Social Security Administration (SSA) congressional budget justifications for purposes of consistent presentation. “Non-add” amounts are displayed for clarification purposes. These amounts are not added to the totals. The amounts in this table differ slightly from the amounts in relevant congressional reports because those reports apply adjustments

to SSA user fees based on Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projections of the amount of money that will actually be collected. CBO projections of SSA user fee collections have typically been less than the total amounts authorized in proposals or legislation.

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