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An update on state and federal action from

The Center for Public Policy Priorities

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U.S. House Ways and Means Committee Retreats from Bipartisan Budget Agreement: Shaw Proposal Would Deny SSI to More Disabled Legal Immigrants

As many readers know, the bipartisan Budget Resolution agreement developed by Republican Leaders and the Administration and passed by both the House and Senate (May 21 and 23) would have restored eligibility for federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for **disabled** Legal Immigrants who were "qualified immigrants" (includes most legally present immigrants) who entered the U.S. on or before August 22, 1996. (Of course, these immigrants would also have to be impoverished; SSI income eligibility is capped at about 75% of the federal poverty level.) This would include both immigrants who are disabled now, and those who become disabled at any point in the future. Importantly, the Congressional Budget Office and Social Security Administration assume that at least two-thirds of persons who currently receive SSI because they are over 65 and impoverished would also meet disability standards based on their health status and activity restrictions.

Shaw's Ways and Means Substitute May Be Misleading.

Readers will recall that the federal Budget *Resolution* is an outline of spending priorities that must be followed by the adoption of both Budget *Reconciliation* and Appropriations bills. Rep. Clay Shaw proposed, and passed out of the House Ways and Means Committee on June 10th by a 21-18 vote, a major dilution of the Budget Agreement in the form of a Budget Reconciliation bill. A cursory look at Shaw's proposal can be somewhat misleading. It would eliminate the cut-off of SSI benefits for all Legal Immigrants who were present in the U.S. and *actually enrolled in SSI* on 8/22/96, including both the elderly poor and the poor with disabilities. However, unlike the budget agreement, the Shaw proposal would not allow immigrants present 8/22/96, but who became disabled **after** the Welfare Act was enacted, to ever get disability support. There were approximately 10 million Legal Immigrants residing in the U.S. (and **not** on SSI) as of 8/22/96; thus, **the original budget agreement would potentially assist many thousands more disabled and frail elderly in the years to come than the Shaw substitute.**

Comparing Proposals:	Immigrants Cut Off SSI in 1997 (U.S. total)	Immigrants Potentially <u>Eligible</u> for SSI in Future Years
Federal Welfare Act 8/96	Approx. 438,000	Those with 10 years work history
Bipartisan Budget Resolution	Approx. 107,000	(a) Any of the 10 million present in U.S. 8/22/96 IF THEY BECOME DISABLED; (b) Those with 10 years work history
Shaw Substitute	0	Those with 10 years work history

Sources: National Immigration Law Center, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

What's Next -- What YOU Can Do:

- The more restrictive Ways and Means version of Budget Reconciliation is expected to go to the full House the week of June 23.
- The Senate Finance Committee will consider its own version of Budget Reconciliation on June 17.
- Texas' Delegation to Congress -- both Congressmen and Senators -- need to hear from individuals and organizations who support the original Bipartisan Budget Agreement, which would guarantee disability benefits to millions of Legal Immigrants if they become disabled in the future.

When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. - Leviticus 19:33

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