

# STRENGTHEN SOCIAL SECURITY

## ...don't cut it.

### Social Security Disability Insurance Works for Alaska

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) provides insurance against a risk faced by all Americans: disability. When workers whose earnings are covered by Social Security are unable to support themselves through work due to a major, life-changing disability, they can expect protections against the loss of wages in the form of SSDI. SSDI is a lifeline for many disabled workers and their families in Alaska, who must meet strict eligibility criteria in order to receive SSDI.

- About 200 thousand workers in Alaska enjoyed SSDI protection in 2011, i.e. could count on monthly cash benefits if they acquired a significant disability that met the strict SSDI eligibility standard.<sup>i</sup>
- 2.8 percent of all Alaska residents aged 18-64 received SSDI benefits in 2013.<sup>ii</sup>
- Of the 86,861 Alaska residents receiving Social Security benefits in 2013, 15,821 – or 18.2 percent – were SSDI beneficiaries.
  - In Alaska, SSDI provided benefits to 12,809 disabled workers in 2013.
  - 176 spouses and 2,836 children of disabled workers in Alaska also received vital benefits from SSDI in 2013.<sup>iii</sup>

### SSDI Benefits in Alaska are Vital, but Modest

For Alaska residents who experience a loss in wages due to a severe disability, SSDI benefits are a vital source of income. SSDI benefits also – like all Social Security benefits – stimulate the Alaska economy.<sup>iv</sup> Yet, critical as they are, these benefits are quite modest—just barely enough to keep an individual out of poverty. For workers whose wages support dependent spouses and children, these benefits are even more critical. To ensure that Alaska workers and their families continue to be protected against the risks of disability, SSDI benefits should not be cut.

- Of the \$1.2 billion received by Social Security beneficiaries in Alaska in 2013, \$200 million, or 17.3 percent, went to SSDI beneficiaries.<sup>v</sup>
- The typical SSDI benefit for a disabled worker in Alaska was \$12,324, just \$834 over the federal poverty level for an individual in 2013.<sup>vi</sup>
- Eligible spouses of disabled workers in Alaska received an average annual benefit of \$3,682 in 2013.
- Eligible children of disabled workers in Alaska received an average annual benefit of \$3,838 in 2013.<sup>vii</sup>

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- <sup>i</sup> Rough, conservative estimate by Social Security Works based on data from the Social Security Administration on the number of covered workers in the state and the share of covered workers nationally who had earned disability benefits in 2011. Social Security Administration, *Earnings and Employment Data for Workers Covered Under Social Security and Medicare, by State and County, 2011*, Table 2, May 2014. [http://www.socialsecurity.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/eedata\\_sc/2011/](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/eedata_sc/2011/). Social Security Administration, “Fact Sheet on the Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance Program,” February 6, 2012. [http://www.ssa.gov/OACT/FACTS/fs2011\\_12.pdf](http://www.ssa.gov/OACT/FACTS/fs2011_12.pdf). About 91 percent of all workers aged 21-64 in covered employment can expect to receive monthly disability benefits if they are determined to meet the SSDI disability standard.
- <sup>ii</sup> Social Security Administration, *Annual Statistical Report on the Social Security Disability Insurance Program, 2013*, December 2014, Table 8. [http://www.socialsecurity.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/di\\_asr/2013/sect01b.html#table8](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/di_asr/2013/sect01b.html#table8)
- <sup>iii</sup> Social Security Administration, *Annual Statistical Supplement, 2014*, February 2015, Table 5.J2. <http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/supplement/2014/5j.html>
- <sup>iv</sup> Social Security Works and the Main Street Alliance, “Business is (Baby) Booming,” March 2013. [http://mainstreetalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/AK\\_Business-Is-Baby-Booming-Report.pdf](http://mainstreetalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/AK_Business-Is-Baby-Booming-Report.pdf)
- <sup>v</sup> Social Security Administration, *Annual Statistical Supplement, 2014*, February 2015, Table 5.J1. <http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/supplement/2014/5j.html>
- <sup>vi</sup> Social Security Administration, *Annual Statistical Supplement, 2014*, February 2015, Table 5.J8. <http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/supplement/2014/5j.html>
- <sup>vii</sup> Social Security Administration, *Annual Statistical Supplement, 2014*, February 2015, Table 5.J4. <http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/supplement/2014/5j.html>. Annual benefits calculated based on monthly benefit amounts for December 2013.