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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0916

December 16, 2014

The Honorable Carolyn Colvin
Acting Commissioner
Social Security Administration
6401 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21235-0001

Dear Commissioner Colvin:

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding reports that the Social Security Administration is continuing to punish innocent taxpayers whose parents may have received overpayments of government benefits decades ago. Penalizing people for the government's failure to correctly calculate their parents' benefits is outrageous.

In April of this year, press reports revealed that the Social Security Administration was targeting the tax refunds of more than 400,000 individuals for seizure due to overpayment of federal benefits. In some instances, the overpayment claims related to funds received long ago – in some cases 50 years earlier – by now-deceased individuals. To settle these debts, your administration seized tax refunds from the children of these individuals through a so-called “administrative offset.”

Days after these reports were published, you stated that the Social Security Administration would cease this practice immediately. Yet just this week, the *Washington Post* revealed that your agency has continued to pursue the children of Social Security beneficiaries. I am shocked your agency has apparently continued this practice irrespective of your pledge to end it.

Seizing funds from people for decades-old overpayments to their parents is unacceptable, and I will work to stop it. I have introduced the Stop Punishing Innocent Taxpayers Act to permanently restore a 10-year statute of limitations on old debts. My bill would prevent the Social Security Administration from seizing tax refunds via “administrative offset” to settle overpayments that occurred more than a decade ago. As Florida's only member of the House Ways & Means Committee and its subcommittee on Social Security, I intend to reintroduce this bill when the new Congress convenes in January.

Sincerely,

Vern Buchanan
Member of Congress

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