

October 2022

ELECTION SEASON; AND OTHER INCURABLE ILLNESSES

Time to vote! Mail, early voting sites, election day. Don't care, just do it. It's hard not to know this, given the current political climate, but just in case: this site has valuable Miami-Dade voter information, including a list of the sites for early voting.

<https://www.miamidade.gov/elections/earlyvoting/wait-times.asp>

The last day for early voting is November 6. If you've already voted, super. If you've voted for some of my Favorite Dems, double super. Need some encouragement? Here's some. Have a Coca Cola. No, rather, have a **COLA**. Many of you are aware of the annual Soc Sec Cost of Living Adjustment. For 2023, the COLA will be 8.7%: for recipients of Title 16/SSI benefits, Title II/SSD benefits, and retirement benefits.

The COLA is designed to offset the anticipated effects of inflation [I think you know what *THAT* is]. So you'll notice the monthly increase in your deposits. The COLA is one of the features of the Social Security program that makes it work. Do the Republicans in the House of Representatives like the COLA? Not so much. So when you vote, remember this, please.

My last email focused upon the substantial delays encountered by disability claimants at the second stage of their claim - this is known as Reconsideration. Crawling out of the Pandemic, the Florida Department of Health, led by Dr. Joseph Ladipo [remember that guy?] had fallen hopelessly behind in it's reviews. The result was that the Reconsideration process, which is a required stage for anyone seeking disability benefits from Social Security, still takes twice as long as it should. I have noticed very little improvement since my last email blast in April.

Therefore, most cases that reach the Hearing stage [Step III], are already over one year old. There is, however, a sliver of good news. Filings for disability on a nationwide basis, and here in Florida, are trending down in terms of pure numbers. This is a trend that actually began before the Pandemic. As a result, the hearings offices no longer fight a backlog of old/aged cases: so most claimants will not have to face a years long wait for their Final Hearing. This was actually the norm at the South Florida hearing Offices: Miami and Fort Lauderdale, for a number of years before the Pandemic. Your wait at the Hearing stage this year, and next, will be less than one year.

Andrew B. Sapiro, Esq.