

Bilirakis Calls Delayed Medicare Refunds Owed to Many of His Constituents 'Unacceptable'

WASHINGTON --

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"We need to get to the bottom of this. It is completely unacceptable that my constituents have been waiting so long for their refunds," Bilirakis said. "I urge the responsible parties to get this cleared up, and immediately inform us as to the status of these requests."

In a two-paged letter sent to CMS Acting Administrator Leslie Norwalk on Thursday, Bilirakis cited more than 200 cases of constituents enrolled in Medicare Advantage plans, which cover Medicare Part B premiums, who still had the premiums deducted from their Social Security checks. In some cases, these erroneous deductions went on for more than 12 months at a cost often exceeding \$2,000.

"These delays have created a serious financial strain on my constituents, many of whom rely on their Social Security checks as their primary source of income," wrote Bilirakis, who sent the letter after repeated unsuccessful attempts to get the status of his constituents' cases. "I am deeply troubled that many of them have been forced to forego rightfully deserved Social Security payments because of bureaucratic backlogs and unresponsiveness from federal officials."

Also on Thursday, Bilirakis supported an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2008 Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations bill that would prohibit funds from being used to pay performance-based bonuses of senior officials at both CMS and SSA.

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