



# 2023 NOSSCR ANNUAL REPORT

**NOSCR**  
CELEBRATING 45 YEARS

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION  
*of* SOCIAL SECURITY  
CLAIMANTS' REPRESENTATIVES

# FROM THE CEO



Dear NOSSCR members,

It's my pleasure to welcome you to NOSSCR's 2023 Annual Report.

The past year was transformational at NOSSCR. In 2023, we began ushering changes designed to make our organization a more vocal, successful voice for our members and to increase the breadth and depth of services we provide.

In this report, we detail many of the changes and enhancements, but I want to first share my thanks, and the thanks of our leadership team, for the support of our membership as we embarked on this effort.

As you'll see in this report, we're leaning in on every front: member resources, continuing education, networking and community-building, and advocacy with decision-makers at SSA and on the Hill.

The changes and efforts we made in 2023 required short-term increased spending, as you'll see in the Financials section of this report. That increased spending ended in October 2023, and we have operated with a balanced budget since then.

Also in this report, four NOSSCR members have graciously shared their perspectives on developments in our practice area and the role NOSSCR plays in their practice. Read their insights on the back page.

In October 2023, I had the opportunity to testify before Congress representing NOSSCR, making recommendations for operational changes at SSA. We renewed many of these recommendations in our Christmas letter to newly sworn-in Commissioner Martin O'Malley. Since then, we've been working collaboratively with Commissioner O'Malley and his leadership team to help Social Security solve problems involving the "cap gap" on attorney's fees, overpayments, payment centers/effectuation, modernization, processing times, regulatory policy changes, and more.

It's been an honor to take on the role of CEO, and I'm optimistic about continued momentum in 2024 and beyond.

David Camp, CEO of NOSSCR

## WELCOME TO THE 2023 NOSSCR ANNUAL REPORT

The National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives (NOSSCR) is a specialized bar association for attorneys and advocates who represent Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income claimants throughout the adjudicative process. Since 1979, NOSSCR has been providing continuing legal education to its thousands of members and public policy advocacy on behalf of its members and the people with disabilities they represent.

### OUR MISSION

NOSSCR's mission is to advocate for improvements in Social Security disability programs and to ensure that individuals with disabilities applying for Social Security Disability and SSI benefits have access to highly qualified representation and receive fair decisions.

### OUR CORE VALUES

Social Security disability benefits are a vital part of our nation's social insurance system and social safety net.

- People with disabilities applying for disability benefits are entitled to high-quality representation in the disability application and appeals process.
- Representation during the Social Security disability programs application and appeals process is critical for claimants.
- Applicants for Social Security disability benefits are entitled to fair and independent adjudications.
- Public policy advocacy to protect and strengthen the Social Security disability programs is integral to achieving NOSSCR's mission.
- Continuing legal education helps ensure that Social Security disability claimants have the highest quality representation possible.

# YEAR IN REVIEW

## Annual Conference

May 3-6

NOSSCR held our 2023 Annual Conference on May 3-6 in Washington, DC. More than 900 people attended the event, making it one of the largest and most successful annual conferences to date.

The event offered a unique opportunity for Social Security and disability advocates across the country to earn continuing education credits for professional development. With satellite events such as the Tom Scully Award Dinner, NextGen Reception, and Women Wine Down, attendees had more opportunities than ever to connect with colleagues.

The 2023 Conference agenda also underscored NOSSCR's renewed commitment to advocating for policies that protect and improve the Social Security program. Among the events:

- Senator Debbie Stabenow, a champion of Social Security and a longtime friend of NOSSCR, delivered a Keynote address at the conference.
- Representatives from the Social Security Administration participated in three separate sessions as well as exhibiting at the event.
- Office of Hearings Operations (OHO) representatives offered two special training sessions on the Enhanced Representative Availability Process (ERAP), SSA's process for representatives to submit availability for hearings.

NOSSCR's Annual Conference is an amazing opportunity to network with peers and absorb timely insights in our ever-changing industry.

## Harkin Retirement Security Symposium

September 13

It was our privilege to help sponsor the Harkin Retirement Security Symposium on September 13, 2023, in Washington DC. This event convenes policymakers and researchers actively working on Social Security reform research and legislation. The symposium focused on preserving and enhancing benefits to improve retirement security, specifically for groups who have no access to other retirement savings or have not accumulated sufficient retirement savings.



## NextGen Retreat

October 19-21

The 2023 NextGen Retreat, held October 19-21 at the Sheraton in New Orleans, LA, was a resounding success.

NextGen members Cody Passman, Stephen Sloan, Joseph Duerst, and Christine Burnside



presented on the sequential evaluation process, federal court appeals, reducing medical records costs, and the ethical obligations at a hearing, respectively.

We also heard from Assistant RCALJ for Region 6, Timothy Suing, along with Susan Ogden, Supervisory Attorney Advisor in New Orleans. Dr. Timothy Saar, a psychologist and DDS reviewer, presented on working with clients with mental and/or intellectual disabilities.

NOSSCR's Senior Counsel and Director of Legal Information, Jennifer Cronenberg, presented on how to handle cases after the claimant passes away. Our CLE Presenting Sponsor was Deuteran Law Group. During the two days of CLE, attendees enjoyed snack breaks sponsored by Heard and Smith and a lunch sponsored by Trajector.

NextGen attendees met and mingled over other events, including a riverboat cruise sponsored by The Federal Appeals Firm, a happy hour sponsored by SSD Appeals, and dinner at Muriel's in Jackson Square sponsored by Insurance Branch. This event would not have been possible without their sponsorship. We are also grateful to Lanier Law Group and Liner Legal for our NextGen Retreat T-shirts and welcome bags.

Our NextGen group is made up of NOSSCR members who have been practicing Social Security law for fewer than 10 years or are under the age of 40. Current NextGen members include four board members: Michael Liner, Maren Bam, Ashley Sappenfield, and Christine Burnside. Just 18 months ago, there was only one NextGen member on the Board. NextGen is truly NOSSCR's next generation of leaders. The retreat provides a valuable opportunity for newer practitioners to connect with colleagues, earn continuing education credits and participate openly in discussions about best practices – all while having some fun!

We are excited about this dynamic group and look forward to sharing more of their voices at future NOSSCR events. We encourage all of our NextGen members to join us or, if you're an experienced practitioner, consider sending your newer associates to our next event!



# FINANCIAL REPORT

NOSSCR has seen an immense amount of change in our 45-year history as leadership, legislation, and public opinion fluctuate. The 2020s have been a challenge on many fronts, but we're excited to step into the new era that started in 2023 when David Camp assumed the interim, and now permanent, role of CEO. David brought an infusion of energy and stability, making moves right away to push NOSSCR's advocacy agenda. He built new relationships with the media, SSA insiders and congressional leaders alike, resulting in some big wins – like testifying before congress on October 26 – and building steady momentum toward systemic change in 2024 and beyond. NOSSCR also stepped up member communication, networking opportunities and resources under David's leadership, offering more value and clearer messaging to ensure members access the resources they need.

NOSSCR made some logistical changes during this time as well, relocating from New York to a larger and more effective physical headquarters in the heart of Washington, DC. This move required investing some of NOSSCR's financial reserves for a portion of 2023. We resumed operations with a balanced budget as of October 17, 2023, and have been steadily been replenishing our cash balances since then.

## Taking Your Concerns to Congress

October 26

On October 26, 2023, then-interim CEO David Camp testified before the House Ways and Means Committee on behalf of our members and their clients. David gave examples of the tragic physical and emotional tolls that SSA's inefficient processes take on real people – especially those who are eligible for compassionate allowance. He also outlined commonsense, no-cost changes to the adjudication process that could improve access to these essential benefits for the people who need them – including disabled, homeless, and terminally ill applicants.



A huge thanks to our members, who have advocated tirelessly for your clients and shared thoughtful, detailed feedback on their experiences.

Our recommendations for changes to SSA procedures are as follows:

- Eliminate reconsideration.
- Rely on treating physicians.
- Standardize and expand the SSA website.
- Allow faxed applications to improve access for the most vulnerable.
- Eliminate phone verification of e-signatures.
- Expand representation to include law firms and other advocacy organizations.
- Simplify the process of designating a representative.
- Expand representative access to include initial and reconsideration claim status information in an existing secure portal.

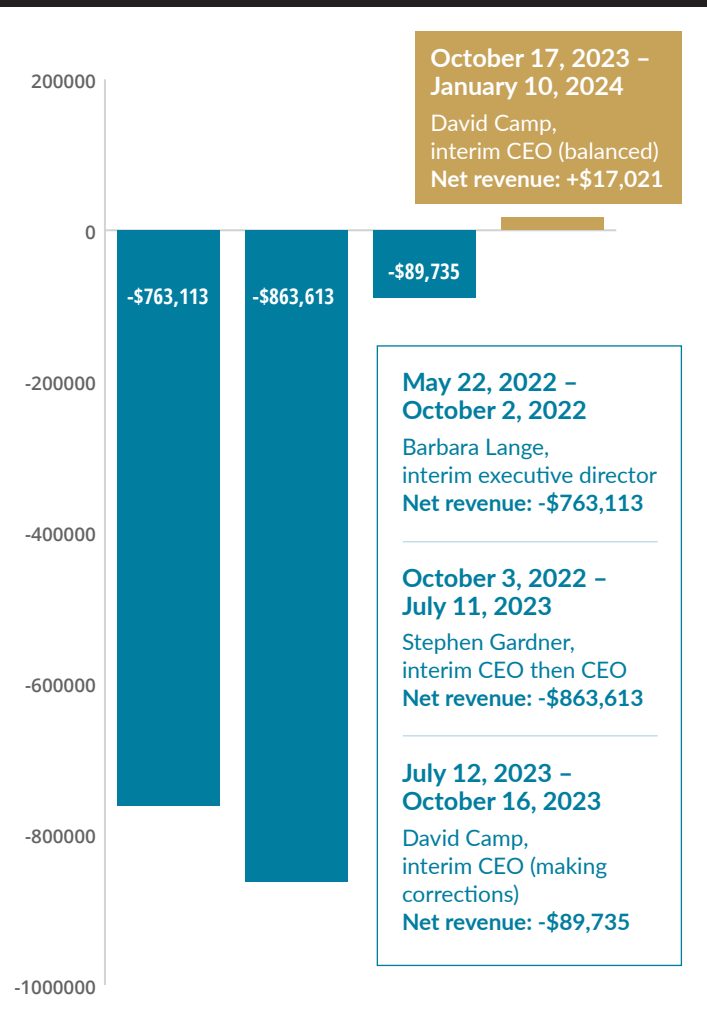
## 2023 Virtual Conference

November 8-9

Our Virtual Conference was held November 8–9, 2023. Attendees had virtual access to sessions and continuing legal education both in real-time and for later viewing. Sessions are also available for on-demand purchase to non-registrants.

The event featured experts from across the Social Security and Disability legal landscape. Speakers gave insightful presentations on navigating the claims process, maximizing representatives' chances of winning cases, running a firm/practice more effectively, finding prospective new clients, and more.

Thank you to everyone who joined us for the 2023 Virtual Conference!



# BENEFITS OF NOSSCR MEMBERSHIP

NOSSCR membership comes with a host of benefits to help members deepen their expertise and develop their practice.



## Industry-leading events

NOSSCR hosts in-person events throughout the year to bring members together for conversation, education, sharing resources, enjoying each other's company and building long-term professional relationships.



## Continued education – online and in person

NOSSCR offers virtual continuing education sessions on a regular basis and hosts virtual and in-person events throughout the year with experts from across the field of Social Security law, including congressional leaders and representatives from SSA.



## Advocacy

If you've hit a wall with SSA, we'll work to connect you with the people at SSA who can help. We work directly with the agency to identify and fix widespread and large-scale issues. We also help members track down aged fees, assist with research, and provide guidance on novel legal issues.



## Referral service

Members can acquire new clients through the NOSSCR's telephone referral service.



## The Forum Newsletter

Stay updated on regulatory changes, industry news, and more.



## Real-Time Updates

Learn about major SSA proposals or changes as they happen.



## Member Discounts

Lower prices on NOSSCR conferences and webinars.



## Job Boards

Recruit employees or find your next job on NOSSCR's Job Board.



## Online communities & tools

Members connect with peers to network, collaborate, share resources via Listservs, and more. NOSSCR also offers resources and tools for navigating the claims process.

# MEMBER RESOURCES

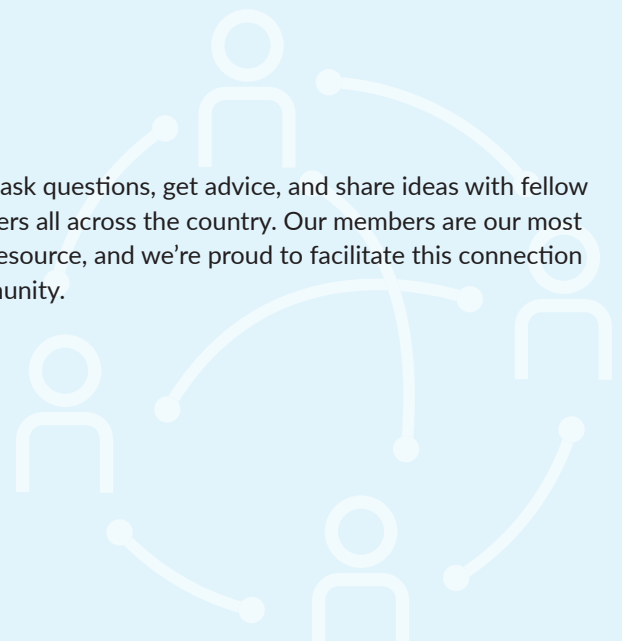
## Listserv: Keeping Members Connected

Past NOSSCR president Chuck Martin built an extensive listserv during his many years in the practice area. When he retired, he passed the listserv to NOSSCR. We implemented moderation functionality, made it exclusive to NOSSCR members, and migrated the listserv to an updated platform in September 2023.

We now have three dedicated lists:

- the main NOSSCR Martin listserv
- the NextGen listserv
- the Legal Services listserv

Members ask questions, get advice, and share ideas with fellow practitioners all across the country. Our members are our most valuable resource, and we're proud to facilitate this connection and community.



Members are the heart and soul of NOSSCR – we simply would not exist without you. Four NOSSCR members shared their perspectives and how NOSSCR has enhanced their practices, their thoughts on 2023, and their outlook for 2024.

**Christine Burnside** has been a NOSSCR member since she began practicing law 2012. She practices in North Carolina and serves on the North Carolina State Bar Specialization Committee. She serves as a co-chair of NOSSCR NextGen and was recently elected to the board of directors as a NOSSCR Fourth Circuit representative.



Christine appreciates the role NOSSCR plays in making connections and opening doors – reaching a hearing office that is seemingly inaccessible by phone, for example, or escalating a question to the right person at SSA to get an answer and move the process forward.

Christine is also passionate about NOSSCR events, having participated in planning both the annual conference and NextGen retreats over the years.

“NOSSCR events are a wonderful space to share knowledge with peers, and NextGen is especially valuable for those who are new to practicing law or pivoting to Social Security and disability law,” Christine said. “There’s so much minutia, so much to learn and retain that you don’t cover in law school. Events are a time for us to come together and learn from each other, compare practices and notes, and simply enjoy each other’s company. Some of my favorite memories of NOSSCR events are strolling and window-shopping with friends while discussing minute details of Social Security law.”

**Chris George** is a solo practitioner based in Galletin, Tennessee. He was born and raised in the area, and went into practice with his father, Philip George, who retired in 2020. Philip was a NOSSCR member since the organization’s inception in 1979, and Chris joined NOSSCR when he began practicing law in 2007.



Chris appreciates the networking and connectivity that NOSSCR facilitates through resources like the Listserv and referral network.

“I can type a question about a specific case or judge into the Listserv and get answers from experts all across the country,” he said. “It’s an invaluable support system, especially as a solo practice attorney.”

He also values NOSSCR’s events, both for peer-to-peer learning and continued legal education.

“Every conference I go to, I pick up a few subtle tips that help me win cases I otherwise may have lost,” Chris said. “I always learn something valuable – membership easily pays for itself.”

He feels cautiously hopeful that the new Commissioner will work toward positive change – and knows for sure that NOSSCR will continue to push the agency in a more claimant-friendly direction.

**Gregg Hobbie** hails from Eatontown, New Jersey. He’s practiced law for 34 years and has been a NOSSCR member for the past 20 years.



“Everything has been taken up a notch in the last year or two,” Gregg said. “The member resources and education were good before, but now they are fantastic. They’ve really taken advantage of technology to connect and educate members, stepped up advocacy in the political arena, and worked with the media to let the world know what’s going on.”

Gregg also appreciates the individual resources and advocacy NOSSCR offers. He uses materials from NOSSCR in every case he handles.

“I can’t tell you how many cases I’ve won using just one or two sentences from a NOSSCR resource during cross-examination of a vocational expert.”

As a solo practitioner, Gregg values the peer-to-peer connectivity NOSSCR facilitates. “The Listserv is so useful for sharing information and experiences with peers across the country,” he said. “Plus, NOSSCR has connections with the agency and government, and their responsiveness is amazing.”

Gregg is optimistic about the future of Social Security and disability. “Not everyone likes change,” he said. “But the world is changing, and we’ve got to keep up to continue serving our clients. I know greatness when I see it, and NOSSCR is doing great things.”

**Kyle Sciarlo** is a Kansas City native who joined NOSSCR five years ago. His practice includes litigation around consultative exams and the exam process.



“NOSSCR has been extremely helpful on these projects, paving new ground at SSA – and ruffling some feathers along the way,” Kyle said. He cites support and mentorship from CEO David Camp, who helped him push through obstacles around the vendor litigation.

Kyle is also a fan of recent changes in NOSSCR’s offerings – the Listserv, high-quality continuing education, and the invaluable resource of a tight-knit community of people who have been doing this work for decades.

“There’s an attitude among some older practitioners that Social Security law is limited to collecting medical records and showing up at a hearing,” Kyle said. “That mentality needs to go. And NOSSCR is doing a good job of pushing us to do more and changing that perception.”