

On February 5, 2009, the Section 218 Federal Task Force for Missouri Public Schools met with Missouri educational association leaders in Jefferson City. Michael Grochowski, the Regional Commissioner for Social Security, is chairing this Task Force. This is the third and last fact-finding meeting of the Task Force as it works to resolve the issue of Social Security coverage of Missouri public school employees. Prior to this meeting, the Task Force gathered information from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and payroll software providers.

The Task Force is comprised of representatives from SSA, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the Missouri Office of Administration, and the Public School Retirement System/Public Education Employee Retirement System (PSRS/PEERS). At the February 5 meeting, representatives of the Task Force explained the historical context of Missouri's Section 218 Agreement, an agreement the State voluntarily entered into with the Federal government to provide Social Security coverage to employees of the State and its political subdivisions. Once a State, on behalf of a school district, requests Social Security coverage for the district's employees, Federal law does not allow the State to terminate that coverage. It was clear from the meeting that the Task Force extensively researched and reviewed Federal and State laws and regulations, the coverage modifications of the Missouri school districts, and the core data maintained by DESE. The changes in both Federal and State law, and the interplay of those laws, contributed to the situation that exists in Missouri today.

Although the issues are complex and have not all been finally resolved, the briefing by the Task Force provided answers to many outstanding questions. Mr. Grochowski confirmed that Social Security coverage changes and taxation would begin on July 1, 2010 – no earlier or later. The next steps of the Task Force are to finalize the coverage determinations and report its findings and recommendations in a report to the Missouri Congressional Delegation. No further information will be released by the Task Force, or others, until the report is released to the delegation. Thereafter, SSA will provide advice and support to OA as the coverage determinations are implemented. OA will develop and implement a communication plan to educate school districts and their employees.