



Outrageous Disability Costs

By Nikki Courtney

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The amount of money the U.S. spends each year on Social Security disability payments is astounding.

14 million Americans get a disability check each month, and the numbers are rising at staggering levels. In some American towns, as many as 25% of residents are on disability, and banks stay open late the day the checks arrive in the mail.

Leading this increase are back pain and mental illness.

Mike Tanner leads research in Social Security for the Cato Institute, and says there has been an evolution from hard diagnoses to more generalized conditions.

“There is a shift away from hard-edged disabilities like heart disease or cancer so some of these softer, more difficult to pin down issues like mental illness, like muscular-skeletal problems,” Tanner tells KTRH News.

Tanner says some reasons are structural, as now even Gen Xer's are getting older, and baby boomers are in the age when ailments abound.

The money all these people are drawing from is not a limitless pit.

“The Disability Insurance Trust Fund, which is separate part of the Social Security Trust Fund, is scheduled to run out of money in the next two years. Something is going to have to be done to reform the program very quickly,” says Tanner.