



# News Release

SOCIAL SECURITY

## **Commissioner Astrue Receives Public Health Leadership Award**

The National Organization for Rare Disorders (NORD) has given Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security, their Public Health Leadership Award. The award was presented at the 2009 NORD Gala at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. The NORD Gala is an annual event at which researchers and others are honored for significant achievements to improve the lives of people with rare diseases.

In recognizing Commissioner Astrue, NORD noted “his focus on reducing the disability backlog and improving service to the public.” A key component of the Commissioner’s backlog reduction plan is the agency’s Compassionate Allowances initiative, a way to expedite the processing of disability claims for applicants whose medical conditions are so severe that their conditions obviously meet Social Security’s standards. Social Security worked closely with NORD in developing the expedited decision process which was launched in October 2008 with a total of 50 conditions -- 25 rare diseases and 25 cancers. Information about the process can be found at [www.socialsecurity.gov/compassionateallowances](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/compassionateallowances).

Among others being honored by NORD is Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) for “lifetime achievement in health promotion leadership and for specific accomplishments on behalf of populations that are underserved by our nation’s healthcare system.”