



SOCIAL SECURITY
Office of the Inspector General

March 30, 2011

The Honorable Lloyd Doggett
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Doggett:

During a March 11, 2011 hearing, you requested that my office advise the Subcommittee on recommendations related to data sharing. I appreciate the opportunity to provide this additional information.

Since 2003, we have made several recommendations to the Social Security Administration (SSA) to explore possible data matches with other State and Federal agencies. To date, SSA has had great success with prisoner matches, but there are many other recommendations that SSA has not yet implemented.

In June 2003, November 2006, and May 2007, we recommended that SSA work with State bureaus of vital statistics (BVS) to obtain matching agreements and purchase marriage records; explore electronic data exchanges with the States that maintain automated workers' compensation databases; and continue encouraging State BVSs to develop and implement electronic death registration (EDR) systems and work with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to achieve the goals of EDR.

More recently, we recommended matches with information from LexisNexis and the Department of Labor (DoL). In July 2009, we recommended SSA assess the costs/benefits of obtaining vehicle/real property data from States or LexisNexis, to verify Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients' resources for initial applications and redeterminations. In an October 2010 report, we recommended SSA develop a computer matching agreement with DoL to identify possible Disability Insurance and SSI claimants whose benefits do not reflect the *Federal Employees Compensation Act* benefits they received. In an ongoing review, we are determining whether obtaining additional pension data from State and local governments would help identify improper payments that result from SSA benefits not being offset as required.

There are challenges to implementing these recommendations; primarily, limited resources and time. States need resources to invest in their data systems so they can provide statewide electronic data to SSA that can then be matched with the Agency's data. We believe the upfront investment is worth the cost to SSA in the long run, by preventing future improper payments. To address this issue, we have recommended a self-sustaining program integrity fund, by which recoveries from overpayments could be reinvested in future projects to save SSA funds.

We also recommend that Congress revisit the *Computer Matching and Privacy Protection Act of 1988* (CMPPA). The CMPPA was enacted more than 20 years ago. Since that time, the use of computers to store data has expanded greatly. The length of time it takes to negotiate a data exchange agreement with each State or local government agency under the CMPPA is prohibitive. It generally takes more than a year, and sometimes several years, for a computer match to be approved. Further, the law states that agreements are effective for 18 months and can be renewed for another 12 months, for a total of 2.5 years. The *Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999* eliminated the need for SSA to enter into matching agreements for prisoner data. However, for other data, the Agency has to spend resources to continually renew agreements every 2.5 years. We have requested an exemption to the CMPPA for SSA and the SSA's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) when the matches are designed to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse. HHS and HHS OIG have such an exemption, and we believe SSA would also benefit from such an exemption.

Another option is to allow all Federal agencies to share information with each other without an agreement. In other words, the Government would be viewed as one entity, rather than as separate agencies that need agreements with one another.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the Subcommittee with this information. If you have any questions, please have your staff contact Misha Kelly, Congressional and Intra-Governmental Liaison, at (202) 358-6319.

Sincerely,

Patrick P. O'Carroll, Jr.
Inspector General