

Hearing on Social Security's Death Records

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Americans are assured that the SSN is not a national identity number. However, for parents to claim dependent children, they must acquire an SSN for each infant . . . or do millions of Americans just make up a number for the 1040? How would anyone know, since no check is made except in extraordinary circumstances? **Principle one:** Use the number as originally intended. Recipients of SSN cards are instructed ON THE CARD not to sign it until they are 18 or have their first jobs. **Solution:** Rescind this part of the IRS Tax Code. Remove SSNs from government birth and marriage records everywhere. Track dependents in a less harmful way. **Result:** Families who tragically lose children are not victimized.

Americans are assured that the SSN may only be required by employers and the IRS, however, Americans are denied loans, driver's licenses, health insurance, medical care, or admission to schools if they refuse to surrender their numbers. These entities who claim a right to living people's SSNs are not required to provide secure storage or to pay damages when SSNs in their care are misused. **Principle two:** End the unnecessary proliferation of SSN requests by entities other than employers or the IRS. **Solution:** Reaffirm that it is unlawful to require a person reveal his or her SSN to anyone but the IRS or an employer. **Result:** Security breaches will not destroy individuals; fraud will not be misdirected onto innocent parties.

Banks and credit companies are particularly irresponsible with SSNs. Past lapses of security have caused immeasurable anguish. **Principle three:** Require audits that review any agency, particularly a bank or credit company to determine whether information is kept securely and that such do not provide backdoors to identity thieves. **Solution:** Prohibit financial institutions from collecting and using SSNs. **Result:** Elimination of this kind of fraud.

Dead people's SSNs can be used fraudulently if these numbers are not accurately published. Employers cannot catch such fraud if the SSDI is inaccurate or incomplete. SSNs are keyboarded by minimum-wage level employees throughout the system. Their work is not proofed. One wrong digit can cause a living person unimaginable suffering. **Principle four:** Ensure the accuracy of reported SSNs for the SSDI. **Solution:** Institute double-entry proofing at all steps in the SSN process. **Result:** Fewer people will become false-positive statistics.

Only through transparency can government function properly. The irresponsible expansion of uses for the SSN has created a nightmare for Americans of a certain age. Worse, misguided agencies have used the SSN for inappropriate purposes, such as Motor Vehicle Registries using SSNs on driver licenses, or State Departments of Health trying to track people from birth to death (EVVE). Maintaining an accurate SSDI for public use is the only way for individuals to protect themselves and for professionals such as private investigators, genealogists, journalists, and medical researchers to conduct reliable research for their clients.

It is inappropriate for bureaucrats to bully law-abiding database providers with threats of retaliation if they continue to provide legally open records. I deplore the tactics used on companies such as *Ancestry.com*.

Dead people do not have more rights than the living. Dead people shouldn't vote – this right can only be protected if deaths are published so poll list supervisors can remove names in a timely fashion. Uses of the SSDI have been myriad. There are thousands of genealogists in America serving hundreds of thousands of clients. Research purposes include medical histories, inheritance rights, historical perspectives, and personal identity issues. Legitimate access should not be curtailed simply because government lacks the flexibility to cope with illegal acts of a very few.

Respectfully submitted,

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