

4 February 2012

House Ways and Means Committee
Subcommittee on Social Security
B 317 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Subject: OPPOSE HR 3475, S 1534, HR 3482, AND HR 3215

Genealogists support Congress's intent to protect Americans from improper usage of their personal information, and to protect them from identity theft. However, genealogists DO NOT support restricting access to public records that have very little to do with identity theft.

The Death Master File is a computer database file made available by the United States Social Security Administration since 1980. It is known commercially as the Social Security Death Index (SSDI). The Death Master File is considered a public document under the Freedom of Information Act.

Currently, four bills are pending in the US Congress that would eliminate or curtail public access to the Social Security Death Index (SSDI) on the Internet. I oppose all of these bills, which are:

- HR 3475, *Keeping IDs Safe Act of 2011* (<http://tinyurl.com/6uwu4aw> - If enacted, this bill would effectively end public access to the death file.)
- S 1534, *Identity Theft and Tax Fraud Prevention Act* (<http://tinyurl.com/75de8o9> - If enacted, this bill prohibits disclosure of the deceased's SSN in calendar year of death and calendar year following death.)
- HR 3482, *Tax Crimes and Identity Theft Prevention Act* (<http://tinyurl.com/83p4b4p> - If enacted, this bill prohibits disclosure of the deceased's SSN in calendar year of death and calendar year following death.)
- HR 3215, *To prevent identity theft and tax fraud* (<http://tinyurl.com/7fgsd5s> - If enacted, this bill prohibits disclosure of the deceased's SSN in calendar year of death and calendar year following death.)

Rarely has it been documented that an individual's identity is violated by access to SSDI; rather, such violations occur due to computer breaches of government and private enterprises. In fact, access to the SSDI is actually a deterrent to identity theft. According to the National Technical Information Service's website (<http://www.ntis.gov/products/ssa-dmf.aspx>), access to the Death Master File helps the financial community, insurance companies, security firms and state and local governments comply with the Patriot Act by identifying and preventing identity fraud. The SSDI is used by credit reporting agencies, merchants, private investigators looking for missing heirs in probates, media reporters, university researchers, and others. It is used by financial and credit firms and government agencies to match records and prevent identity fraud.

Genealogists located both in and outside the United States doing US research rely heavily on the SSDI, which has been made available by the US Social Security Administration since 1980.

I oppose HR 3475, S 1534, HR 3482, and HR 3215.

Thank you,

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