

Blanche M. Wallace  
1420 W Harvard St  
Orlando, Florida 32804  
407-423-0094  
[blanchew@bellsouth.net](mailto:blanchew@bellsouth.net)

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Re: Social Security Death Records Hearing - "Keep IDs Safe Act"

This is written on my own behalf as a family historian who uses the Social Security Death Index (SSDI) to research the history (especially, the medical history) of my family. Using the SSDI to obtain the place and date of death allows me to request the correct death certificate from the appropriate state agency. The medical histories created from this research allow the living to better inform and plan ahead with their physicians. Without access to the SSDI, this type research would be eliminated or severely hampered.

Obituaries (print and digital) provide date of death and can easily be used by criminals for the purpose of identify theft. However, obituaries rarely mention the cause of death so they can't be used for the purpose of tracking ancestral medical history.

In fact, the SSDI is a deterrent to identity theft according to the National Technical Information Service (NTIS) website (<http://tinyurl.com/yb6e49e>) which states that the Death Master File (SSDI is the commercial name of this list) prevents identity fraud, as it verifies a person's death. In addition to family history researchers, the SSDI is used by credit reporting agencies, merchants, private investigators looking for missing heirs in probates, media reporters, university researchers, and others.

Rarely has it been documented that an individual's identity is violated by access to the SSDI; rather, the violations occur due to computer breaches from government and private enterprises. A 2009 study stated "in the last five years, approximately 500 million records containing personal identifying information of United States residents stored in government and corporate databases was [sic] either lost or stolen"<sup>1</sup>. Many of these computer breaches have been well documented in the press.<sup>2</sup>

1. <http://www.identitytheft.info/breaches09.aspx>

2.

[http://www.boston.com/business/articles/2008/03/18/grocer\\_hannaford\\_hit\\_by\\_computer\\_breach/](http://www.boston.com/business/articles/2008/03/18/grocer_hannaford_hit_by_computer_breach/)  
[http://www.nctimes.com/news/local/article\\_3b98ce38-f048-597e-9a76-47321d114326.html](http://www.nctimes.com/news/local/article_3b98ce38-f048-597e-9a76-47321d114326.html)  
[http://www.qctimes.com/news/local/article\\_06d38e24-146a-11df-91c6-001cc4c03286.html](http://www.qctimes.com/news/local/article_06d38e24-146a-11df-91c6-001cc4c03286.html)

Your consideration of these points in favor of maintaining open access to the SSDI will be appreciated.

Thank you.