

January 30, 2012

Representative Sam Johnson (R-TX)
U.S. House of Representatives
1211 Longworth Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
202-225-4201

Re: HR 3475, to prevent public access to SSDI;
Keeping IDs Safe Act of 2011

Senator Bill Nelson
U.S. Senate
716 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-5274

Re: SB 1534, to prevent disclosure of deceased's
social security number for two years.

Gentlemen:

As you know, Congressman Sam Johnson, Chairman of the House Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Social Security, has organized for the Subcommittee to hold a hearing on the accuracy and uses of the Social Security Administration's Death Master File, with commercial name Social Security Death Index (SSDI), on Thursday, February 2, 2012 in B-318 Rayburn House Office Building, starting at 9 am.

Because of problems where a few living people are mistakenly identified as deceased and where, rarely, social security numbers of dead children are stolen by thieves who use the stolen numbers on IRS returns to claim tax benefits, Congress is reacting wildly, by proposing to shut down all public access to SSDI. I suggest you review the specific draft comments dated January 24, 2012 to Rep. Margaret Hostetler on the House Ways and Means Committee, by Jan Meisels Allen, Managing Member, Records Preservation and Access Committee, c/o Federation of Genealogical Societies, PO Box 200940, Austin TX 78720-0940, with phone 1-888-FGS-1500 and any follow-up comments.

I would like to say generally, that as a volunteer genealogist, who works occasionally as a volunteer with my local DAR chapter and occasionally, for free, with distant relatives and friends, to trace family histories, that we find the SSDI useful. When one has general information for a deceased relative; such as name, range of two to three states, and a five-year range for death; one may find confirming information with SSDI, such that one then may contact the town library and ask for newspaper obituaries or death notices. One then may learn the cemetery where the deceased person is buried and, sometimes, next of kin.

Public access to SSDI is important. Please don't "throw the baby out with the bathwater," by imposing onerous conditions on public access to SSDI.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

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