

To: [waysandmeans.submissions@mail.house.gov](mailto:waysandmeans.submissions@mail.house.gov)

Leslie Brinkley Lawson  
5180 SW 198<sup>th</sup> Ave  
Aloha, OR 97007-2964  
503-649-6679  
[Leslie@LawsonResearch.net](mailto:Leslie@LawsonResearch.net)  
Social Security Death Records

As an American Citizen I am writing in regards to the following bills before the committee:

- 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, the 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 To prevent identity theft and tax crimes. <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)

**First, I must say how incensed I am as an American citizen that I have been shut out of the process regarding the closer of SSDI.** By refusing to allow genealogists to testify and convey to you how important this record group you have sent a strong message to this individual voter. This decision affects my business greatly; the loss would affect me in an insurmountable way. I am a forensic genealogist. My job is to recreate family groups from very broken families to find heirs to estates or to figure out who their family is when they are no longer able to speak for themselves (dementia, Alzheimer's, brain injury). If you remove access to the SSDI you cripple the identity process used by forensic researchers. I ask that you reconsider these actions by reviewing the information noted below.

It has been proven time and again that identity theft has nothing to do with the SSDI, and everything to do with computer hackers. Please refer to the [2009 Security Breaches and Database Breaches](#).

It might be better to require business to use the SSDI to prove they aren't hiring someone who is fraudulently using the number of a dead person. Require credit card companies to use the SSDI before approving credit cards for every person they extend credit to.

- Genealogy is a serious profession.

- Genealogists use the SSNs to appropriately identify records of people when tracing family medical history, especially if the person has a common name: Sara Cohen, Tom Brown, Jose Martinez, Trung Lee, etc. Genealogy assists in tracing family medical problems that are passed on from generation to generation. Information included in birth, marriage, and death records is critical to reconstructing families and tracing genetically inherited attributes in current family members. The SSN is critical to make certain that one has the correct person. Increasing numbers of physicians are requesting that their patients provide a “medical family tree” in order to more quickly identify conditions common within the family. Information on three generations is the suggested minimum. The US Surgeon General includes preparing a family medical history as part of the American Family Health Initiative.
- Genealogists work with coroners to find next of kin for the deceased. The identities of these people are known, but the government agencies are not always able to find the families, so they are literally unclaimed. It is a national problem with which coroners must cope. See [unclaimedpersons.org](http://unclaimedpersons.org)
- Genealogists work with military to locate relatives of soldiers who are still unaccounted for from past conflicts. While using DNA, the genealogists also need SSNs to help assure they are finding the correct person’s family.
- Other stakeholders who are concerned and want full and immediate access to the SSDI include: the financial and insurance industries [they need the information timely so that they can verify deaths to pay out death claims and verify beneficiaries for paying retiree benefits]; federal, state and local law enforcement agencies; Lexis-Nexis; charities legacy departments and planned gifts departments, medical researchers [tracking morbidity cluster deaths and tracking mortality of medical trial results]; state, county government and teacher retirement funds; county assessment offices, student loan companies; universities for student loans, tracing alumni mortalities and other activities, enhanced collections department of state courts, and other stakeholders that we are learning about daily.

We need this database left whole. Its benefits far outweigh the negative press.

Thank you.

Leslie Brinkley Lawson  
Forensic Genealogist

<http://www.lawsonresearch.net/>