



## STONE HOUSE HISTORICAL RESEARCH

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RE:

*Please oppose*

- HR 3475, Keeping IDs Safe Act of 2011
- S 1534, the Identity Theft and Tax Fraud Prevention Act
- HR 3482 To prevent identity theft and tax crimes.
- HR 3215 To prevent identity theft and tax

Dear Congressmen and Congresswomen:

I perform research, through SNA International, for the Department of Defense related to the congressional mandate to repatriate the remains of unaccounted-for service personnel. The majority of these are from World War II and the Korean Conflict. My research identifies and locates the primary living next of kin and the family members eligible to provide DNA Family Reference Samples to aid in identification of remains. I could not effectively conduct this research without free access to the Death Master File – Social Security Death Index (SSDI). Many of these servicemen and most of their parents were born before universal vital records registration. The mid-twentieth century was a time of increasing migration of families, and the SSDI is very often the only resource available to trace the serviceman's deceased relatives in order to find their living descendants. I believe that the tiny number of cases in which the SSDI was misused is far outweighed by the positive effects it provides to bring closure to the families of those who gave their lives for our freedom.

Likewise, I also use the SSDI in my research cases for attorneys to locate the heirs and next of kin in probate and title insurance matters. For example, the SSDI allowed me to trace the deceased siblings of an elderly woman who died subsequent to Alzheimer's disease, and locate her living great-nieces and great-nephews who had the right to be notified about her estate. This research reunited a family that had lost contact with each other in a previous generation. In another case, a property owner discovered that they did not own clear title to their front yard. The SSDI allowed the identification of the next of kin of the former property owner, now long deceased, so that the title could be repaired. All of this research would become impossible or, at best, significantly more expensive and time-consuming if the SSDI was not freely available. In closed-records states, the SSDI may be the only source that meets Rules of Evidence to document deaths to the satisfaction of the courts.

*The SSDI was designed to prevent identity theft and fraud. Rather than eliminating it, its use should be strengthened so that banks and the IRS are required to cross reference social security numbers with the SSDI to assure that a deceased person's number is not being reused. Making it inaccessible or difficult (and expensive) to access would be counter-productive and would prevent all the positive outcomes for which it is used today.*

Loss of public access to this irreplaceable resource will have many negative financial, legal, and human costs. *I oppose* the bills listed at the top of this letter. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Catherine W. Desmarais, Certified Genealogist  
Owner, Stone House Historical Research