

Call to Action: Social Security Death Index (SSDI)

All politics is local. Legislators listen to constituents who live and vote in their district. It is very important for Genealogists to visit their legislators while they are home on Congressional recess late in May or early July. Call and make an appointment.

Background: If passed, the following bills would limit access to the SSDI.

U. S. House of Representatives

- Nugent (FL-R) HR 295: closure of SSDI for two years. Least objectionable bill.
- Caster (FL-D) HR531: allows access to SSDI for those certified by the Secretary of Commerce. RPAC is asking for certified and forensic genealogists to be certified by the Secretary of Commerce.
- Capuano (MA-D) HR466: Closes SSDI. RPAC strongly opposes this bill.
- Johnson (TX-R) HR 781

U.S. Senate

- Senate Finance Committee held a hearing 16 April 2013 on "Tax Fraud & Tax Identify Theft." The hearing revealed that the IRS is finally closing some of the tax fraud loopholes. Also the examples of identity theft at the hearing involved living individuals. RPAC is working with Senator Orin Hatch (UT-R) who sits on this committee and supports genealogy issues.
- Senators Nelson(FL-D), Schumer(NY-D) & Cardin(MD-D) introduced a bill SB676 that would close the SSDI for two years after a person died unless certified by Secretary of Commerce with "legitimate interest" in fraud prevention . . . with no provisions for genealogists to be certified.

Genealogy Talking Points:

- Closing access to the SSDI will not stop identity theft. Most identity theft happens to living individuals when large electronic databases are hacked.
- Since December 2011, the largest providers of genealogical databases have either omitted the social security number from its posted information, or agreed not to post the SSDI for several years after a person dies.
- The IRS has begun to use filters to flag suspicious returns. Investigations and prosecutions are up. The National Taxpayer Advocate, Nina E. Olson, has suggested that the IRS not issue any refunds until it can compare each tax return to informational data reported to the IRS by third parties. Living taxpayers remain vulnerable.
- Forensic genealogists, who need to access the SSDI for important humanitarian work, should be invited to testify at Congressional hearings. Forensic genealogists assist the military in the repatriation of service persons' remains by identifying and locating living relatives; help county coroners identify the relatives of unclaimed persons; and by locating missing heirs for probate attorneys. Genealogists who are researching genetically inherited disease in their family also need unlimited access to the SSDI.