

Social Security Administration (SSA)

Congressional Update



Government Imposter Scam Calls

While our employees are conducting most business by phone due to the pandemic (ssa.gov/coronavirus), we want to remind you and your constituents that our employees will never:

- Threaten benefit suspension, arrest, or other legal action unless a fine or fee is paid.
- Say that a Social Security number has been suspended.
- Promise a benefit increase or other assistance in exchange for payment.
- Require payment by retail gift card, cash, wire transfer, internet currency, or pre-paid debit card.
- Demand secrecy in handling a Social Security-related problem.
- Send official letters or reports containing personally identifiable information via email.

If your constituents owe money to Social Security, we will mail them a letter explaining their payment options and appeal rights. If they are unsure of the identity of someone who claims to be from Social Security, they should hang up or delete the email.

Encourage your constituents to report Social Security scams to our Office of the Inspector General at oig.ssa.gov.

NEW LAW HELPS CLAIMANTS WITH ALS

The *ALS Disability Insurance Access Act of 2019* eliminated the five-month disability insurance benefits waiting period for individuals with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) who file for benefits on or after December 23, 2020. Barring any potential changes to the new law, applicants who filed before December 23, 2020 will remain subject to the waiting period. They can, however, withdraw their claim and re-file to take advantage of the new law.

For claims-related inquiries on behalf of constituents, contact our Liaison Office on Capitol Hill at **202-225-3133**.

Find all of our legislative bulletins at ssa.gov/legislation.

Want more information from Social Security?
Check our other publications

SOCIAL SECURITY UPDATE
ssa.gov/news/newsletter

SOCIAL SECURITY MATTERS BLOG
blog.SSA.gov

PRESS RELEASES
ssa.gov/news/press-releases



Securing today and tomorrow



Coming Soon: “Slam the Scam” Day 2021

SSA is again teaming up with our Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to promote awareness about Social Security scams. In 2020, the OIG received over 718,000 scam complaints and is continuing to work with the Department of Justice and other law enforcement agencies to identify and pursue scammers and their facilitators.

In our continued effort to educate and protect the public against scamming, we are holding our second “**Slam the Scam**” Day on March 4, 2021.

More information is available at oig.ssa.gov.



CASEWORK CORNER

You can get answers to the most frequently asked questions about Social Security at faq.ssa.gov. We also provide information in multiple languages at ssa.gov/site/languages/en/



HILL STAFF HELP

OLCA's fact sheets to help you answer inquiries from your boss or constituents are available at ssa.gov/legislation/resources.html



CONGRESSIONAL STATISTICS

Visit ssa.gov/policy/docs/factsheets/cong_stats for the number of Social Security and SSI beneficiaries in each state and district.

Information about hearings during the COVID-19 pandemic

We remain committed to serving your constituents during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, while taking reasonable measures to protect both the public and our employees. Many of our customers – older Americans and people with underlying medical conditions – are at increased risk of severe illness with this disease. As a precautionary measure, our hearing offices are closed to the public and are not offering in-person services for the foreseeable future. In lieu of in-person service, we are providing two flexible, safe, and secure Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) hearing options for your constituents: a telephone hearing or our newest option of an online video hearing.

Online video hearings are a secure way to conduct hearings over the internet, using a free platform called Microsoft Teams. Your constituents and their representative, if they have one, can attend the online video hearing safely and securely from any private place with a secure internet connection using a camera-enabled smartphone, tablet, or computer. You can read our publication *Online Video Hearings at the Social Security Administration* at www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-70-10284.pdf for additional information.

Your constituents are not required to have a telephone or an online video hearing; however, we encourage people who need a decision on their claim to agree to one of these hearing options. We do not yet have an estimate of when we will be able to hold in-person hearings again. To learn more about hearing options offered during this time, visit www.ssa.gov/appeals/hearing_options.html.

Our hearing office employees are available by phone to assist your constituents with:

- Confirming availability for a telephone hearing.
- Documenting a request for a postponement until an in-person or video hearing is available.
- Updating telephone number and address information.
- Providing status of a pending hearing.

Claimants and representatives can also send us necessary documents by fax or e-Fax. You and your constituents can find telephone, fax, and e-Fax numbers for our hearing offices using our hearing office locator at www.ssa.gov/appeals/ho_locator.html.

FAQ

Question: Can SSA provide assistance with Medicare questions?

Answer: While we do not administer the Medicare program, your constituents will work with us when they sign up for most coverage, request a replacement Medicare card, or check their eligibility for Medicare coverage. For more information about when your constituents should contact Social Security for their Medicare needs, visit www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10500.pdf.

Question: Where can I get answers to my economic impact payment (EIP) questions?

Answer: We have some information about the second EIPs for Social Security beneficiaries and Supplemental Security Income recipients available at www.ssa.gov/coronavirus/eip2. Constituents who did not receive a second EIP or have questions related to the second EIP should visit the Internal Revenue Service's (IRS) new Second Economic Impact Payment FAQs at www.irs.gov/coronavirus/second-eip-faqs. They can also call the IRS' EIP hotline at 1-800-919-9835 if their question is not addressed on the IRS' website.

Please remember that Social Security's telephone representatives cannot answer EIP questions.