

Solutions, Strategies, Answers

*Newsletter of the Social Security Administration Offices in
Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lehigh, Monroe, Montgomery, Northampton and Philadelphia counties*



July 2017

Issue #66

Welcome to the July 2017 edition of *Solutions, Strategies, Answers*, a newsletter produced by the 18 Social Security Administration offices in southeastern Pennsylvania.

2017 Social Security Board of Trustees Annual Report

DISABILITY FUND IMPROVES BY FIVE YEARS

On July 13, 2017, the Social Security Board of Trustees released its annual report on the long-term financial status of the Social Security Trust Funds. The combined asset reserves of the Old-Age and Survivors Insurance, and Disability Insurance (OASDI) Trust Funds are projected to become depleted in 2034, *the same as projected last year*, with 77 percent of benefits payable at that time. The DI Trust Fund will become depleted in 2028, extended from last year's estimate of 2023, with 93 percent of benefits still payable.

In the 2017 Annual Report to Congress, the Trustees announced:

- The asset reserves of the combined OASDI Trust Funds increased by \$35 billion in 2016 to a total of \$2.85 trillion.
- The combined trust fund reserves are still growing and will continue to do so through 2021. Beginning in 2022, the total annual cost of the program is projected to exceed income.
- The year when the combined trust fund reserves are projected to become depleted, if Congress does not act before then, is 2034 – the same as projected last year. At that time, there will be sufficient income coming in to pay 77 percent of scheduled benefits.

Other highlights of the Trustees Report include:

- Total income, including interest, to the combined OASDI Trust Funds amounted to \$957 billion in 2016. (\$836 billion in net contributions, \$33 billion from taxation of benefits, and \$88 billion in interest).
- Total expenditures from the combined OASDI Trust Funds amounted to \$922 billion in 2016.
- Social Security paid benefits of \$911 billion in calendar year 2016. There were about 61 million beneficiaries at the end of the calendar year.
- Non-interest income fell below program costs in 2010 for the first time since 1983. Program costs are projected to exceed non-interest income throughout the remainder of the 75-year period.
- The projected actuarial deficit over the 75-year long-range period is 2.83 percent of taxable payroll – 0.17 percentage point larger than in last year's report.
- During 2016, an estimated 171 million people had earnings covered by Social Security and paid payroll taxes.
- The cost of \$6.2 billion to administer the Social Security program in 2016 was a very low 0.7 percent of total expenditures.
- The combined Trust Fund asset reserves earned interest at an effective annual rate of 3.2 percent in 2016.

View the entire 2017 Trustees Report at www.socialsecurity.gov/OACT/TR/2017/.

View a [Summary](https://www.ssa.gov/OACT/TRSUM/index.html) of the 2017 Trustees Report at <https://www.ssa.gov/OACT/TRSUM/index.html>.

Keeping a Careful Eye On Your Earnings Record

Whether you are ready to retire, just joining the workforce, or somewhere in between, you should regularly review your Social Security earnings record.

Did your employer properly report your work earnings to us? Your employers — past and present — are responsible for providing accurate earnings information to Social Security, so that you get credit for the contributions you have made through payroll taxes.

We rely on you to inform us of any errors or omissions. Only you can look at your lifetime earnings record and verify that it is complete and correct.

On average, we process about 236 million W-2 wage reports from employers, representing more than \$5 trillion in earnings. More than 98% of these wages are successfully posted with little problem.

So, what is the easiest and most efficient way to validate your earnings record?

- Visit www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount to set up or sign in to your own *my Social Security* account;
- Under the “My Home” tab, click on “Earnings Record” to view your online *Social Security Statement* and taxed Social Security earnings;
- Carefully review each year of listed earnings and use your own records, such as W-2s and tax returns, to confirm them; *and*
- Keep in mind that earnings from this year and last year may not be listed yet.

Sooner is definitely better when it comes to identifying and reporting problems with your earnings record. As time passes, you may no longer have past tax documents and some employers may no longer be in business or able to provide past payroll information.

If you need to correct your earnings record, check out our one-page fact sheet at www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/EN-05-10081.pdf.

Want to Subscribe to Solutions, Strategies, Answers?

Contact us at
edward.lafferty@ssa.gov or richard.gaudiosi@ssa.gov



Securing today
and tomorrow



Widows and Widowers – Remarriage after Age 60 (50 if Disabled)

There are about five million widows and widowers receiving monthly Social Security benefits based on their deceased spouse's earnings record. A widow or widower can receive:

- reduced benefits as early as age 60, or full benefits at **full retirement age** or older.
- benefits as early as age 50, if they are disabled AND their disability started before or within seven years of your death.

If a widow or widower remarries **after they reach age 60** (age 50 if disabled), the remarriage will not affect their eligibility for survivors benefits.

Note: If a surviving divorced spouse remarries **after they reach age 60** (age 50 if disabled), the remarriage will not affect their eligibility for survivors benefits

<https://www.ssa.gov/planners/survivors/onyourown2.html>

What if You Change Your Mind?

Unexpected changes may occur after you make your decision about when to start your Social Security Retirement benefits.

If you began receiving your retirement benefits, but later wished you had chosen a different start date (*or perhaps not taken benefits at all just yet*), you may be able to make the change. You can withdraw your claim and then re-apply at a future date.

However, if you change your mind 12 months or more after you became entitled to retirement benefits, you cannot withdraw your application. **Note:** You are limited to one withdrawal per lifetime.

<https://www.ssa.gov/planners/retire/withdrawal.html>