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On the Social Security Death Index

Lately there has been many discussions on the Social Security Death Index, a database that is invaluable to anyone who tries to trace a family forwards in time.

The following was found on the *Ancestry.com* web site:

One of the free resources we've recommended for years to search, the online Social Security Death Index (SSDI) has been taken offline. RootsWeb's SSDI database is no longer available, with a message that due to sensitivities around the information in this database, the Social Security Death Index collection is not available on our free Rootsweb service but is accessible to search on *Ancestry.com*.

The SSDI is a database of deaths reported to the Social Security Administration, for the most part since 1962. A subscription is required to use *Ancestry.com*'s version of the SSDI, and genealogists including Randy Seaver and Sheri Fenley report that Social Security numbers aren't provided for deaths within the past 10 years.

You might think genealogists wouldn't be concerned with such a recent death, but someone who died in 2002 might've been born in 1920, and his or her application for an SSN (called an SS-5) could name parents born in the 1800s. Plus, the SSDI is useful for tracing family lines forward in time to find distant cousins.

Randy lists other sources of the SSDI, which include the free FamilySearch site.

If you don't have a deceased person's SSN, you still can request his or her SS-5. You'll need to provide a birth date, any other names the person used, and the parents' names, and pay \$29 instead of \$27. You now can request an SS-5 online.

The "sensitivities" RootsWeb refers to are likely related to a recent news

story about criminals using SSNs of deceased individuals to commit tax fraud. (Couldn't the IRS prevent this by comparing SSNs on tax forms to numbers in the SSDI?)

Why can't I see the Social Security Number? If the Social Security Number is not visible on the record index it is because *Ancestry.com* does not provide this number in the Social Security Death Index for any person that has passed away within the past 10 years.

(Ancestry.com, 13 december 2011).

The RPAC starts action against the loss of the SSDI

The following announcement was written by The Records Preservation & Access Committee (RPAC) of the National Genealogical Society (NGS), the Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS), and the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS):

Excerpt:

Tax Fraud and Identity Theft:

Genealogists Are Not To Blame

The House Ways and Means Committee Subcommittee on Social Security is proposing to completely shut down use of the SSDI by genealogists as well as other industries such as banking and insurance that rely upon its information. Such an attempt is shortsighted and runs counter to the original purpose of the SSDI: to actually combat fraud.

Loss of Access to SSDI Affects More Than Genealogists

The SSDI is accessed by many different companies, non-profits, and other entities besides individuals researching their family history. Foren-

sic specialists utilize the SSDI when reuniting remains of military veterans with their next-of-kin and descendants. Law offices, banks, and insurance companies utilize the SSDI to resolve probate cases and to locate heirs.

All of these entities would be required to spend more money and more time leveraging other resources of information when the SSDI has served this purpose, uninterrupted, for over a decade.

RPAC Petitions Obama Administration

The *We the People* petition, now posted at <http://wh.gov/khE> and accepting signatures, has a simple yet effective mission:

Take immediate steps that would curtail the filing of fraudulent tax refund claims based upon identity theft from recently deceased infants and adults.

No need for lengthy hearings in front of a Congressional committee. No need for filing statements for or against any House action. No need to waste time and effort which could be directed to more pressing national issues. In fact, the National Taxpayer Advocate in 2011 issued suggestions which do not require additional legislation but can be implemented collaboratively between the IRS and Social Security Administration (SSA) almost immediately in time to impact the current tax filing season.

(Dick Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter 2012 Feb.7).

To find out what is happening it is important to follow a blog like Dick Eastman's or Dear Myrtle's. *Links on page 30.*

Compiled by Elisabeth Thorsell