



FEDERATION OF AMERICAN CONSUMERS AND TRAVELERS

- NEWS RELEASE -

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Social Security Administration Makes Money-saving Changes

EDWARDSVILLE, IL, May 10, 2011 - Vicki Rolens, managing director of the Federation of American Consumers and Travelers (FACT), reports that there have been some changes in Social Security Administration (SSA) policies designed to save \$190 million each year.

For one thing, Rolens reports, the SSA is switching from paper checks to electronic payments. Anyone applying for Social Security benefits on or after May 1, 2011 will receive benefits checks electronically, either through Direct Deposit or Direct Express. Those who are receiving benefits prior to May 1, 2011 can continue to receive paper checks but will need to switch to one of the electronic methods noted above by May 1, 2013.

If you wish more information about the SSA's electronic payment methods, you may visit www.GoDirect.org.

The second cost-saving step is the suspension of annual Social Security Benefits statements. Up until now, the SSA has sent out a Social Security Statement to each person, about three months prior to that person's birthday. The report includes the individual's earnings history and an estimate of the retirement, disability and survivors benefits that he or she can expect upon retirement.

Those mailings have been suspended for the remainder of this year. The SSA expects to resume the mailings in 2012 to those who are 60 or older. If you are younger than 60, you can still request a copy of your benefits statement. Additionally, you can use the SSA's Benefit's Estimator (<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10510.html>) to help you estimate your Social Security retirement benefits. The SSA is also working on options for people to access their benefit statements online.

Rolens recommends that individuals request a copy of the statement periodically if one is not automatically forthcoming from the SSA. "It not only provides an estimate of the retirement, disability, and survivor benefits that you are likely to receive," she says, "it also gives you the earnings history that the SSA uses to calculate your benefits. It's important to check your earnings history and to notify SSA of any possible errors to ensure that you receive the benefits to which you ultimately will be entitled."

This news release has been issued by the Federation of American Consumers and Travelers (FACT), a consumer organization formed under the not-for-profit corporation laws of the District of Columbia in 1984. FACT serves more than 1 million consumers nationwide. Additional information on FACT may be found in the Encyclopedia of Associations, and by visiting the association's Web site (www.usafact.org). Informative, unbiased news bulletins are regularly disseminated by FACT to help its members remain current on matters which might seriously impact their lives. The association does not offer support to -- and does not receive support from -- any political party or movement. In addition to publishing consumer-related reports, the association provides more than 40 benefits for its members, ranging from medical insurance and dental discounts to prescription drug savings and scholarships. FACT's administrative office is located at 318 Hillsboro Avenue, Edwardsville, IL 62025