

Social Security

Accountability Report
For Fiscal Year 1997





Customer Service Pledge

We will administer our programs effectively and efficiently to protect and maintain the Social Security trust funds and to ensure public confidence in the value of Social Security. We are committed to fair and equitable service to our customers. We promise to respect your privacy and safeguard the information in your Social Security record.

We are equally committed to providing you with world-class public service. When you conduct business with us, you can expect:

We will provide service through knowledgeable employees who will treat you with courtesy, dignity and respect every time you do business with us.

We will provide you with our best estimate of the time needed to complete your request and fully explain any delays.

We will clearly explain our decisions so you can understand why and how we made them and what to do if you disagree.

We will make sure our offices are safe, pleasant and our services are accessible.

When you make an appointment, we will serve you within 10 minutes of the scheduled time.

If you request a new or replacement Social Security card from one of our offices, we will mail it to you within five working days of receiving all the information we need. If you have an urgent need for the Social Security number, we will tell you the number within one working day.

When you call our 800 number, you will get through to it within five minutes of your first try.

We know that you expect world-class service in all of your dealings with us. In 1994, when we set these standards, we were unable to meet your expectations in some areas, but we have worked to change that. We are revising all our critical work processes to make them simpler, quicker and more customer-friendly. When we redesign our processes, you can expect:

When you first apply for disability benefits, you will get a decision within 60 days.



SOCIAL SECURITY

A Message from the Commissioner

As Commissioner of the Social Security Administration (SSA), maintaining the public's trust and providing vigilant stewardship of their funds is a vital goal to me and to this Agency. Therefore, I am pleased to issue SSA's Accountability Report for Fiscal Year (FY) 1997. The Report presents financial, programmatic and performance data to provide a comprehensive picture of how SSA uses its budgetary authority in achieving that goal.

SSA provides the public with world-class service in a number of areas. Results of our 1997 Customer Satisfaction Survey indicate 85 percent of customers surveyed rate SSA service as good or very good -- up 6 percentage points since 1996. We continue to increase the number of bilingual employees to make sure our non-English-speaking customers receive the same high quality of service as our English-speaking customers, and we are streamlining and automating claims, thereby cutting down field office waiting times. We are also proud of innovative leadership in payment delivery through electronic banking.



During FY 1997, SSA's 800-number telephone service handled over 50 million calls. While the volume of inquiries alone is impressive, the ability to answer our customers' questions satisfactorily is the real measure of success. We are proud to say that 82 percent of respondents to our Customer Satisfaction Survey said SSA staff are knowledgeable and provide clear information. We continue to actively educate the public about SSA's programs. Video programming, satellite broadcasts and the Internet are just a few of the new venues we are using. Our Web site, Social Security Online, offers interactive access to 600 documents, and private industry publications herald the site as one of the best.

On the basis of SSA's comprehensive management control program, I am pleased to certify, with reasonable assurance, that SSA's systems of accounting and internal controls are in compliance with the internal control objectives in the Office of Management and Budget's Bulletin Number 93-06. I also believe these same systems of accounting and internal controls provide reasonable assurance that the Agency is in compliance with the provisions of the Federal Managers' Financial Integrity Act. The significant aspects of the management control program are discussed in the Report. Furthermore, we believe that SSA's Program Benefits, Financial Accounting and Debt Management Systems comply substantially with Federal financial management systems requirements, applicable Federal accounting standards and the United States Government Standard General Ledger at the transaction level as required by the Federal Financial Management Improvement Act of 1996.

As we approach the new millennium, we remain committed to meeting the challenges of servicing the American people as stewards of this important public trust. The new Agency Strategic Plan, published in September 1997, will guide us in this endeavor. The plan reflects SSA's commitments not just to processing work, but also to ensuring that the accuracy and integrity of our processes are second to none. In the words of SSA's first Commissioner, Arthur J. Altmeyer, upon the 10th anniversary of the Social Security program in 1945, "Social Security will always be a goal, never a finished thing, because human aspirations are infinitely expandable - just as human nature is infinitely perfectible." That message is as relevant today as it was over 50 years ago.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kenneth S. Apfel".

Kenneth S. Apfel
Commissioner
of Social Security



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Ten-Year Summary of Financial Highlights..

For the Fiscal Years Ended September 30, (Dollars in Billions, except for unit costs)	1997	1996	1995	1994
Assets				
Investments	\$631.0	\$549.5	\$483.2	\$419.5
Total Assets	648.6	565.9	499.1	450.1
Revenues				
Tax Revenues	405.3	381.2	356.2	\$340.8
Interest Income	42.5	37.6	34.2	30.1
Total Revenue and Financing Sources	481.2	449.5	427.4	407.9
Outlays				
Benefit				
OASI	\$312.9	\$300.0	\$288.6	\$276.3
DI	45.4	43.2	40.2	36.8
SSI	26.5	24.3	24.5	24.2
Administrative	6.2	5.6	5.7	5.4
Ratios				
Return on Trust Fund Investments	6.7%	7.7%	8.0%	8.1%
Long Range OASDI Actuarial Deficit as a Percentage of Taxable Payroll	2.23%	2.19%	2.17%	2.13%
Administrative Outlays as % of Benefit Outlays	1.6%	1.5%	1.6%	1.6%
% Change in SSA's Overall Productivity	2.2%	2.3%	5.2%	2.1%
Number of Beneficiaries (In Millions)*				
OASI	37.8	37.6	37.5	37.2
DI	6.1	6.0	5.8	5.5
SSI	6.6	6.6	6.5	6.2
Unit Costs (Current Dollars)				
Issue SSNs	\$13.58	\$12.56	\$11.53	\$11.68
Process Annual Wage Reports	.38	.45	.53	.57
Issue Earnings Statements**	1.69	1.96	1.54	4.58
Process Initial Claims (Overall Average)	366.47	354.71	358.02	384.45
Maintain Benefit Rolls (Overall Average Per Work Unit)	17.64	15.76	15.18	15.02
Provide Due Process (Overall Average)	711.46	695.08	651.48	630.07
Cost to Collect \$1	.09	.12	.13	.13

* Includes individuals receiving benefits from more than one program.

** SSA began issuing legislatively mandated SIPEBES in FY 1995; those costs are reflected in the FY 1995-1997 unit costs.



1993	1992	1991	1990	1989	1988
\$365.7	\$319.4	\$268.7	\$215.2	\$157.0	\$104.5
376.4	329.2	278.4	223.0	163.5	109.4
\$316.5	\$308.2	\$299.3	\$286.7	\$268.2	\$245.6
27.4	24.6	21.1	17.1	11.5	7.2
378.0	363.5	346.1	326.0	303.0	275.4
\$264.6	\$251.3	\$236.1	\$219.0	\$204.6	\$196.1
33.6	30.4	26.9	24.3	22.5	21.4
21.0	17.9	14.6	11.5	11.4	14.1
5.2	4.9	4.3	3.9	4.0	4.0
9.0%	9.0%	9.5%	10.3%	10.3%	10.9%
1.46%	1.46%	1.08%	.91%	.70%	.58%
1.6%	1.6%	1.6%	1.5%	1.7%	1.8%
7.5%	9.7%	(2.1%)	(2.4%)	5.5%	5.8%
36.9	36.5	36.0	35.4	34.9	34.5
5.2	4.8	4.4	4.2	4.1	4.1
5.9	5.5	5.0	4.8	4.6	4.4
\$11.30	\$11.19	\$11.15	\$10.60	\$11.91	\$10.13
.51	.49	.45	.46	.55	.62
3.88	3.83	4.45	4.85	4.81	5.97
381.90	411.96	423.98	415.58	331.02	437.83
15.53	17.55	18.57	21.26	21.37	22.03
606.58	682.24	819.17	810.95	803.51	777.91
.13	.13	.13	.13	NA	NA



Accountability Report for FY 1997

Foreword

The program and financial performance information presented in this report covers all the programs administered by the Social Security Administration (SSA). The Overview of SSA presents SSA's performance in meeting key goals and performance measures (PM) relating to the three broad fundamental goals of the Agency as set forth in the Agency Strategic Plan published in 1991. In September 1997, SSA released its refreshed strategic plan which established a new mission statement and strategic goals which are discussed on page 65. The Supplemental Information section provides PMs relating to the business process and service delivery interfaces included in SSA's business plan.

This is the third year SSA has been authorized by the Office of Management and Budget to issue an Accountability Report which consolidates the mandatory reporting requirements of the Chief Financial Officers Act, Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), Prompt Payment Act, Debt Collection Act and the Federal Managers' Financial Integrity Act. Also included are the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) Inspector General's Report to Congress and SSA's Management Report on Final Action to OIG recommendations. This year, we have incorporated the reporting requirement of Section 206(g) of the Social Security Independence and Program Improvements Act and the Federal Financial Management Improvement Act of 1996.

The financial statements beginning on page 26 have been prepared to report the financial position and results of operations of SSA, pursuant to the requirements of the Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990.

While the statements have been prepared from the books and records of SSA in accordance with formats prescribed by the Office of Management and Budget, the statements are different from the financial reports used to monitor and control budgetary resources which are prepared from the same books and records.

The statements should be read with the realization that they are for a component of a sovereign entity, that liabilities not covered by budgetary resources cannot be liquidated without the enactment of an appropriation, and that the payment of all liabilities other than for contracts can be abrogated by the sovereign entity.

SSA's FY 1997 GPRA Annual Performance Report is provided on pages 66 and 67. It contains actual performance against performance measures included in SSA's FY 1997 Business Plan and other significant output measures.

SSA's Accountability Report for FY 1997 and other information about the Social Security programs are available through the Internet on SSA's home page at <http://www.ssa.gov>. The SSA homepage is updated on an ongoing basis with current information relating to the Social Security programs and their administration.