



SOCIAL SECURITY

The Commissioner

November 9, 2011

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. President:

Enclosed for consideration of the Congress is a draft bill to require participation in the Enumeration at Birth (EAB) program. The program has been highly successful over the last twenty years and provides a safe, easy, and convenient way for parents to enumerate their children as well as significant cost savings for the Federal government. Enclosed you will find a section-by-section description of the provisions of the bill.

These amendments would codify our current practice of contracting with the States through the EAB program. Parents would no longer need to request a Social Security number (SSN) for their child. We would enumerate the child as part of the birth registration process. Parents may still request an SSN for their child through the traditional application process if, for some reason, they do not receive an SSN through this automated process. Currently, all 50 States, and the jurisdictions of Puerto Rico, New York City, and the District of Columbia offer EAB. We reimburse the States for participation on a per item basis (\$2.37 for each child born in 2010).

This program provides a convenient service to the public. The evidence required to process an SSN application for a newborn is the same evidence gathered by hospital employees and verified with the respective bureaus of vital statistics during the birth registration process. Thus, EAB saves parents the inconvenience of gathering the necessary documents, completing an application for an SSN, and visiting or mailing original documents to a field office for processing. The majority of parents choose EAB when offered.

The States also benefit from the program. When EAB began, States relied on a cumbersome and time-consuming paper birth registration process. To improve the timeliness of State EAB submissions, we provided funding to States to expand or develop electronic birth certificate processes. Under these processes, hospital personnel submit birth certificate information electronically to us through the State Bureau of Vital Statistics. In addition, through this process, we provide States with the newborn's SSN. The State uses SSN information to administer public health and income maintenance programs, which include conducting statistical studies and evaluation projects. Such programs include, but are not limited to, establishing childhood immunization registries and evaluating the efficacy of intervention programs such as the Women, Infants and Children nutrition program, "Healthy Start," and other health maintenance programs.

Finally, the program results in significant savings to the Federal government. In fiscal year 2010, it cost us \$32 to issue a card through our field offices compared to \$8 through EAB. That year, we assigned SSNs to approximately 4 million newborns through EAB. In addition to the cost savings, the program frees up time in our field offices to take benefit applications and to conduct valuable program integrity work. About 45.4 million people visited our field offices last fiscal year. Without the EAB program, we could have had an additional 4 million visitors, an increase of 9 percent.

The Office of Management and Budget has advised that there is no objection to the transmittal of this bill to the Congress. The bill's enactment would be in accord with the program of the President. We urge the Congress to give the bill prompt and favorable consideration.

I am sending an identical letter to the Honorable John Boehner, Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael J. Astrue", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Michael J. Astrue

Enclosures



SOCIAL SECURITY

The Commissioner

November 9, 2011

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Enclosed for consideration of the Congress is a draft bill to require participation in the Enumeration at Birth (EAB) program. The program has been highly successful over the last twenty years and provides a safe, easy, and convenient way for parents to enumerate their children as well as significant cost savings for the Federal government. Enclosed you will find a section-by-section description of the provisions of the bill.

These amendments would codify our current practice of contracting with the States through the EAB program. Parents would no longer need to request a Social Security number (SSN) for their child. We would enumerate the child as part of the birth registration process. Parents may still request an SSN for their child through the traditional application process if, for some reason, they do not receive an SSN through this automated process. Currently, all 50 States, and the jurisdictions of Puerto Rico, New York City, and the District of Columbia offer EAB. We reimburse the States for participation on a per item basis (\$2.37 for each child born in 2010).

This program provides a convenient service to the public. The evidence required to process an SSN application for a newborn is the same evidence gathered by hospital employees and verified with the respective bureaus of vital statistics during the birth registration process. Thus, EAB saves parents the inconvenience of gathering the necessary documents, completing an application for an SSN, and visiting or mailing original documents to a field office for processing. The majority of parents choose EAB when offered.

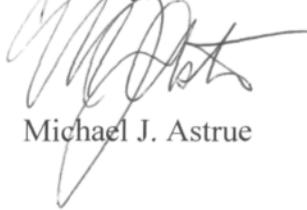
The States also benefit from the program. When EAB began, States relied on a cumbersome and time-consuming paper birth registration process. To improve the timeliness of State EAB submissions, we provided funding to States to expand or develop electronic birth certificate processes. Under these processes, hospital personnel submit birth certificate information electronically to us through the State Bureau of Vital Statistics. In addition, through this process, we provide States with the newborn's SSN. The State uses SSN information to administer public health and income maintenance programs, which include conducting statistical studies and evaluation projects. Such programs include, but are not limited to, establishing childhood immunization registries and evaluating the efficacy of intervention programs such as the Women, Infants and Children nutrition program, "Healthy Start," and other health maintenance programs.

Finally, the program results in significant savings to the Federal government. In fiscal year 2010, it cost us \$32 to issue a card through our field offices compared to \$8 through EAB. That year, we assigned SSNs to approximately 4 million newborns through EAB. In addition to the cost savings, the program frees up time in our field offices to take benefit applications and to conduct valuable program integrity work. About 45.4 million people visited our field offices last fiscal year. Without the EAB program, we could have had an additional 4 million visitors, an increase of 9 percent.

The Office of Management and Budget has advised that there is no objection to the transmittal of this bill to the Congress. The bill's enactment would be in accord with the program of the President. We urge the Congress to give the bill prompt and favorable consideration.

I am sending an identical letter to the Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael J. Astrue", written over the word "Sincerely,".

Michael J. Astrue

Enclosures

A Bill

To amend Title II of the Social Security Act to provide for enumeration at birth.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

Sec. 1. Section 205(c)(2)(B) of the Social Security Act is amended by—

- (a) in clause (i) striking the “and” at the end of subclause (II).
- (b) in clause (i) striking “and, in carrying out such duties, the Commissioner of Social Security is authorized to take affirmative measures to assure the issuance of social security numbers:”.
- (c) in clause (i) striking subclauses (IV) and (V) and inserting in lieu thereof:
 - “(IV) to citizens of the United States at the time of their birth in any State; and
 - “(V) upon application, to any other citizen or national of the United States not previously issued such number.”
- (d) striking clause (iii) and inserting in lieu thereof:
 - “(iii) In carrying out the requirements of this subparagraph, the Commissioner shall enter into an agreement with each State (or political subdivision thereof) to assure the issuance of a social security account number at the time the State records the birth of the citizen, and each State (or political subdivision thereof) shall enter into an agreement with the Commissioner and provide the information the Commissioner requires to issue such numbers as required by this subparagraph. The Commissioner may pay from amounts available for administration of this Act, the reasonable costs (established by the Commissioner in consultations with the States) for transcribing and transmitting such information to the Commissioner .”
- (e) adding at the end thereof the following:
 - “(iv) The Commissioner is authorized to enter into such additional agreements as may be necessary with the Attorney General and other Federal, State, and local officials to facilitate compliance with the requirements of this subparagraph.
 - “(v) For purposes of this subparagraph, the term “State” includes the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.”.

Sec. 2. The provisions of this section are effective 180 days after enactment.

Section-by-Section Description

Section 1

Section 1 would grant the Commissioner of Social Security specific authority to enter into agreements with, and reimburse, States for the State birth registration information necessary to assign Social Security numbers (SSNs) to U.S. citizens at birth. Section 1 would also require the States (or political subdivisions thereof) to transmit such information to the Commissioner at the time the State records the birth. It would also define the term "State" to include the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. These changes would not preclude parents from filing a traditional SSN application for their child if necessary.

Section 2

Section 2 would make the provisions described above effective 180 days after enactment.