



A Brief History



On the cover:

President Franklin Roosevelt signs the Social Security Act into law.

*For more information about the history of Social Security, visit our Internet site
at www.socialsecurity.gov/history.*

Contents

The Development of Social Security	2
A foundation of economic security	2
The Social Security Act	3
Implementing the Act	4
First payments	6
1939 amendments	6
Monthly benefits	7
1950 amendments	7
The story of COLAs	8
Social Security Benefit Increases 1950-2014	9
Disability benefits	10
Medicare & other changes	11
The 1970s	12
Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program	13
The 1980s	14
The 1990s	16
The new millennium	17
The growth of Social Security	20
Key Dates in the History of Social Security	22
Agency Organizational History	31
Social Security Board members	34
Social Security Commissioners	35
Contacting Social Security	39

The Development of Social Security

A foundation of economic security

For most of history, people lived in extended families and worked on farms. This environment provided their economic security—until the Industrial Revolution arrived and changed the developed world forever.

As the country shifted from an agricultural to an industrial economy, Americans moved from farms and small rural communities to larger cities, and as a result, more people became wage earners, working for others. In 1890, only 28 percent of the U.S. population lived in cities. By 1930, this percentage had exactly doubled to 56 percent.

In Europe in the late 19th century, the idea developed for social security as one form of economic security in a modern industrialized world. Germany put the world's first social security retirement program, designed by Germany's legendary Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, into effect in 1889.

In the United States, the Great Depression of the 1930s triggered a crisis in the nation's economic life, and, against this backdrop, the Social Security Act emerged.



Bismarck

The Social Security Act

On June 8, 1934, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in a message to the Congress, announced his intention to provide a program for social security. Subsequently, the president created, by executive order, the Committee on Economic Security, which was composed of Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor, Chairwoman; Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Secretary of the Treasury; Henry A. Wallace, Secretary of Agriculture; Homer S. Cummings, Attorney General; and Harry L. Hopkins, Federal Emergency Relief Administrator.



Frances Perkins

He instructed the committee to study the entire problem of economic security and to make recommendations for Congress to consider for legislation.

In early January 1935, the committee made its report to the president, and on January 17, the president introduced the report to both Houses of Congress for simultaneous consideration. Each House passed its own version, but eventually resolved the differences, paving the way for President Roosevelt to sign the Social Security Act into law on August 14, 1935. In addition to several provisions for the general welfare, the new Act created a social insurance program designed to pay retired workers age 65 or older a continuing income.

Implementing the Act

One provision of the Act established a bipartisan Social Security Board (SSB) composed of three members appointed by the president. The original members were John G. Winant, chairman; Arthur J. Altmeyer; and Vincent M. Miles. Eventually, the current Social Security Administration, headed by a single commissioner, replaced the SSB. In 1935, the SSB faced the task of providing employers, employees, and the public with information on how to report earnings, what benefits were available, and how they were to be provided. In addition, they had to choose sites for field offices and hire and train staff to work in the offices.



*First meeting of the Social Security Board, 9/14/35.
Left to right: Altmeyer, Winant and Miles*

In January 1, 1937, workers began acquiring credits toward old-age insurance benefits and payroll taxes started being collected the SSB's first monumental task was to register employers and workers to be ready for these events. Since the SSB didn't have

the resources available to accomplish this, they contracted with the U.S. Post Office to distribute the applications, beginning in November 1936. The post offices collected the completed forms, typed the Social Security number cards, and returned the cards to the applicants. The applications then were forwarded to the SSB's processing center located in Baltimore, where the numbers were registered and various employment records established. More than 35 million Social Security cards were issued through this procedure in 1936-37.



Postmen in New York City distributing Social Security number applications in November 1936

The first Social Security number was issued to John D. Sweeney, Jr. of New Rochelle, New York. The lowest number ever issued (001-01-0001) was to Grace Dorothy Owen of Concord, New Hampshire

First payments

The 1935 law called for monthly benefits to start in 1942. From 1937 until 1942, the law also called for Social Security to pay benefits to retirees in the form of a single, lump-sum refund payment. A retired Cleveland motorman named Ernest Ackerman, who retired one day after the Social Security program began, applied for the earliest-reported lump-sum refund. During his one day of participation in the program, a nickel was withheld from Mr. Ackerman's pay for Social Security, and, upon retiring, he received a lump-sum payment of 17 cents. The average lump-sum payment during this period was \$58.06. The smallest payment ever made was for 5 cents.



Ernest Ackerman

1939 amendments

The original Act provided only retirement benefits, and only to the worker. The 1939 Amendments made a fundamental change in the Social Security program. The amendments added two categories of benefits: payments to the spouse and minor children of a retired worker (called dependents benefits) and survivors benefits paid to the family in the event of the premature death of the worker.

The 1939 Amendments also increased benefit amounts and moved up the start of monthly benefit payments by two years—starting them in 1940 instead of 1942.

Monthly benefits

Payment of monthly benefits began in January 1940. On January 31, 1940, the first monthly retirement check was issued to a retired legal secretary, Ida May Fuller, of Ludlow, Vermont, in the amount of \$22.54. Miss Fuller died in January 1975 at the age of 100. During her 35 years as a beneficiary, she received more than \$22,000 in benefits.



Ida May Fuller

1950 amendments

From 1940 until 1950, virtually no changes were made in the Social Security program. Because the program was still in its infancy, Social Security's retirement benefits were very low. In fact, until 1951, the average welfare benefit received under the old-age assistance provisions of the Act was higher than the average retirement benefit received under Social Security. The program only covered about 50 percent of America's workers at that time. In 1950, major amendments raised benefits for the first time and placed the program on the road to the virtually universal coverage it has today.

The story of COLAs

Social Security benefits increase annually to offset the effects of inflation on fixed incomes, known as cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs). COLAs weren't always a part of the benefit program—the \$22.54 benefit Ida May Fuller received for her first payment in January of 1940 was the same amount she could expect to receive for life. In the 1950 Amendments, Congress legislated the first general benefit increase—a 77 percent raise. And, until 1972, benefits increased only when Congress enacted special legislation.



President Truman signs the 1950 amendments.

In 1972, the law changed to add automatic annual COLAs beginning in 1975, based on the annual increase in consumer prices.

Social Security Benefit Increases 1950-2014

Effective Date	Percent Increase	Effective Date	Percent Increase
9/50	77.0	12/90	5.4
9/52	12.5	12/91	3.7
9/54	13.0	12/92	3.0
1/59	7.0	12/93	2.6
1/65	7.0	12/94	2.8
2/68	13.0	12/95	2.6
1/70	15.0	12/96	2.9
1/71	10.0	12/97	2.1
9/72	20.0	12/98	1.3
3/74	7.0	12/99	2.5
6/74	11.0	12/00	3.5
6/75	8.0	12/01	2.6
6/76	6.4	12/02	1.4
6/77	5.9	12/03	2.1
6/78	6.5	12/04	2.7
6/79	9.9	12/05	4.1
6/80	14.3	12/06	3.3
6/81	11.2	12/07	2.3
6/82	7.4	12/08	5.8
12/83	3.5	12/09	0.0
12/84	3.5	12/10	0.0
12/85	3.1	12/11	3.6
12/86	1.3	12/12	1.7
12/87	4.2	12/13	1.5
12/88	4.0	12/14	1.7
12/89	4.7		

Notes: The increase in March 1974 was a special, limited-duration increase, effective for only March to May of 1974. In June 1974, all payment levels reverted to their February 1974 level, and the 11 percent increase was permanently applied on this base. The COLA for December 1999 was originally determined as 2.4 percent; it was subsequently raised, however, to 2.5 percent. Initially, the automatic COLAs were effective in June each year (and received in the July payment), but a 1983 change in the law shifted the effective date to December (for payments received in January).

Disability benefits

The Social Security Amendments of 1954 initiated a disability insurance program that provided the public with additional coverage against economic insecurity. At first, there was a disability “freeze” of workers’ Social Security records during years when they were unable to work. While this measure offered no cash benefits, it did prevent such periods of disability from reducing or wiping out retirement and survivor benefits. On August 1, 1956, the Social Security Act was amended to provide cash benefits to disabled workers aged 50-65 and disabled adult children.



President Eisenhower signs the “disability freeze” bill.

Over the next few years, Congress broadened the scope of the program, permitting the dependents of disabled workers to qualify for benefits. Eventually, disabled workers at any age could qualify.

Medicare & other changes

The 1960s brought additional changes to the Social Security program. A provision in the Amendments of 1961 lowered the age at which men are first eligible for retirement benefits to 62 (women previously were given this option in 1956).



President Johnson signs the Medicare Bill, in the presence of former President Harry Truman (seated, right).

The most significant change involved the passage of Medicare. Under Medicare, health coverage was extended to Social Security beneficiaries aged 65 or older (and eventually to those receiving disability benefits as well). Nearly 20 million beneficiaries enrolled in Medicare in the first three years of the program. Social Security would continue to have responsibility for the Medicare program until a 1977 reorganization created the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA). HCFA assumed administrative responsibility for Medicare at that

time. In 2001, HCFA was renamed the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

The 1970s

In addition to the automatic annual COLA provision, the 1972 law introduced wage-indexing of the initial benefit amount upon retirement to ensure that Social Security benefits would keep up with standards of living. These two changes, taken together, introduced the principle of automatic adjustments in Social Security benefits to compensate for both wage and price inflation in the economy.

The 1970s also saw stress on program financing as the adverse economic conditions of that era combined with a maturing program to produce the first period of sustained fiscal imbalance in the system. Amendments enacted in 1977 sought to restore financial balance to the system.



President Carter signs the 1977 amendments.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program

In addition to the financing changes introduced in the legislation of 1972 and 1977, the 1970s also saw the creation of the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program.

The original 1935 Social Security Act introduced programs for needy aged and blind people and, in 1950, expanded the program to add needy disabled people. These three programs were known as the “adult categories” of welfare and were administered by state and local governments with partial federal funding. Over the years, the state programs became more complex and inconsistent, with as many as 1,350 administrative agencies involved and payments varying more than 300 percent from state to state. In 1969, President Nixon identified a need to reform these and related welfare programs to “bring reason, order, and purpose into a tangle of overlapping programs.” In 1971, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Elliot Richardson proposed that Social Security assume responsibility for the adult categories. In the Social Security Amendments of 1972, Congress federalized the adult categories by creating the SSI program and assigned responsibility for it to Social Security.

SSI is a needs-based program for elderly, blind, and disabled people.

The 1980s

The Social Security Amendments of 1980 made changes in the disability program. Most of these changes focused on work incentive provisions for both Social Security and SSI disability benefits. The 1980 Amendments also required Social Security to conduct periodic reviews of current disability beneficiaries to certify their continuing eligibility. This became a massive, controversial workload. By 1983, the reviews had been halted, and, in 1984, Congress passed the Disability Benefits Reform Act modifying several aspects of the disability program, including how disability reviews are conducted.



Greenspan Commission

In the early 1980s, the Social Security program faced a serious short-term financing crisis. President Ronald Reagan appointed a panel, known as the Greenspan Commission, to study the financing issues and make recommendations for legislative changes. The final bill, signed into law in April 1983, made numerous changes in the Social Security program, including the partial taxation of Social Security benefits; the

first coverage of federal employees; raising the retirement age gradually starting in 2000; and increasing the reserves in the Social Security trust funds.



President Reagan signs the 1983 amendments.

In 1989, as part of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, President George Bush signed into law the requirement that Social Security send annual *Social Security Statements* to almost all persons working under Social Security. These Statements are an important financial planning tool available from Social Security.



President Bush signs the 1989 law authorizing annual Social Security Statements.

The 1990s

Social Security became an independent federal agency in March 1995, and its Commissioner of now reported directly to the president. Under the 1994 legislation, the periodic Social Security Advisory Councils were abolished and a permanent seven-member bipartisan Social Security Advisory Board was formed to provide independent advice and counsel on Social Security.



Former Social Security Commissioners on the occasion of the unveiling of the new independent-agency logo, March 1995.

Welfare reform legislation signed by President Clinton in August 1996 eliminated the old Aid to Families with Dependent Children program from the original Social Security Act and replaced it with new time-limited benefits linked to a work requirement. The legislation also terminated SSI eligibility for most noncitizens (this provision was scaled back in 1997). Also, the eligibility rules for awarding SSI disability benefits to children were tightened.

On December 17, 1999, the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 became law, providing disability beneficiaries with a voucher they could use to get vocational rehabilitation services, employment services, and other support services from an employment network of their choice. The law also provided incentive payments to providers for successful rehabilitations in which the beneficiary returns to work. The provisions also provided safeguards to the beneficiaries to protect their benefits and health.



President Clinton signs the "Ticket to Work" bill, December 1999.

The new millennium

On April 7, 2000, President Clinton signed H.R. 5, The Senior Citizens' Freedom to Work Act of 2000 into law, eliminating the Retirement Earnings Test for beneficiaries at or above full retirement age. The test still applied to beneficiaries below the full

retirement age. This allowed approximately 900,000 people who were collecting benefits, and working, to avoid having their benefits reduced because of work. The aim of this bill was to avoid penalizing seniors who chose to work in retirement.

Faced with continuing long-range financing shortfalls in the Social Security program, on May 1, 2001, President George W. Bush appointed a 16-member bipartisan President's Commission to Strengthen Social Security. In December 2001, the commission issued its report. The commission offered three possible scenarios for how personal accounts might be introduced into the Social Security program, as part of an effort to restore its financial balance. The report also recommended that “there be a period of [national] discussion... before legislative action is taken to strengthen and restore sustainability to Social Security.”

At the start of his second term, in his State of the Union address, President Bush emphasized the need to “pass reforms that solve the financial problems of Social Security once and for all.” The president established basic principles to guide reform, including the “guarantee that there is no change for those now retired or nearing retirement” and that “any changes in the system are gradual.” He pledged to work with Congress to find the most effective combination of reforms to strengthen Social Security for future generations.

Administratively, the *Ticket to Work* regulations were finalized in late 2001, and the program launched in the first set of states in early 2002.

In late 2003, President Bush signed into law

the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act. The Social Security Administration has significant administrative responsibilities in the implementation of this law. In 2004, the President signed into law the Social Security Protection Act to improve the management of the representative payee process and the Identity Theft Penalty Enhancement Act.

In recent years, improvements have been made to enhance the integrity of Social Security numbers, to guard against identify theft, to ease the wage reporting burdens on small businesses, and to streamline the processing of disability claims.



President Bush introduces the members of his Presidential Commission to Strengthen Social Security.

The growth of Social Security

Social Security has grown. One in six Americans receives a Social Security benefit, and about 98 percent of all workers are in jobs covered by Social Security. From 1940, when slightly more than 222,000 people received monthly Social Security benefits, until today, when more than 4959 million people receive such benefits, Social Security has grown steadily.

The SSI program, meanwhile, provides income support to more than eight million people.

Program Growth

Social Security

Year	Beneficiaries	Dollars ^(b)
1937	53,236 ^(a)	\$1,278,000
1938	213,670 ^(a)	\$10,478,000
1939	174,839 ^(a)	\$13,896,000
1940 ^(e)	222,488	\$35,000,000
1950	3,477,243	\$961,000,000
1960	14,844,589	\$11,245,000,000
1970	26,228,629	\$31,884,000,000
1980	35,584,955	\$120,598,000,000
1990	39,832,125	\$247,816,000,000
2000	45,414,794	\$407,635,000,000
2001	45,877,506	\$431,931,000,000
2002	46,444,317	\$453,821,000,000
2003	47,038,486	\$470,778,000,000
2004	47,687,693	\$493,263,000,000
2005	48,434,436	\$520,767,000,000
2006	49,122,826	\$546,200,000,000
2007	49,864,978	\$585,000,000,000
2008	50,898,396	\$615,400,000,000
2009	52,522,819	\$675,500,000,000
2010	54,032,097	\$701,600,000,000
2011	55,404,480	\$725,100,000,000
2012	56,768,185	\$774,800,000,000
2013	57,978,610	\$812,300,000,000
2014	59,007,158	\$848,463,000,000

SSI

Year	Beneficiaries ^(c)	Dollars ^(d)
1974	3,996,064	\$5,096,813,000
1975	4,314,275	\$5,716,072,000
1980	4,142,017	\$7,714,640,000
1985	4,138,021	\$10,749,938,000
1990	4,817,127	\$16,132,959,000
1995	6,514,134	\$27,037,280,000
2000	6,601,686	\$30,671,699,000
2001	6,688,489	\$32,165,856,000
2002	6,787,857	\$33,718,999,000
2003	6,902,364	\$34,693,278,000
2004	6,987,845	\$36,065,358,000
2005	7,113,879	\$37,236,000,000
2006	7,235,583	\$38,900,000,000
2007	7,359,525	\$41,200,000,000
2008	7,520,501	\$43,000,000,000
2009	7,676,686	\$46,600,000,000
2010	7,912,266	\$48,200,000,000
2011	8,112,773	\$49,500,000,000
2012	8,262,877	\$52,100,000,000
2013	8,363,477	\$53,900,000,000

- a. Recipients of one-time lump-sum payments. Beneficiaries as of December.
- b. Benefits payments only, annual totals.
- c. Recipients of federally administered payments only. Beneficiaries as of December.
- d. Includes both federal payment and federally administered state supplementation payments. Annual Totals.
- e. Start of monthly retirement benefits under Social Security; prior years are single lump-sum payouts only.

Key Dates in the History of Social Security

Here is a summary of some of the key dates in the development of the Social Security program.

- 06/08/34:** In his message to Congress, President Roosevelt recommends federal legislation to promote economic security.
- 06/29/34:** President Roosevelt creates the Committee on Economic Security to study the problems related to economic security and to make recommendations for a program of legislation.
- 01/17/35:** The Committee on Economic Security's recommendations are introduced in the 74th Congress.
- 04/19/35:** The Social Security Act is passed in the House of Representatives, 372 to 33.
- 06/19/35:** The Social Security Act is passed in the Senate by a vote of 77 to 6.
- 08/14/35:** The Social Security Act becomes law with President Roosevelt's signature.
- 08/23/35:** The Senate confirms the president's nomination of the original members of the Social Security Board: John G. Winant, Chairman; Arthur J. Altmeyer; and Vincent M. Miles.
- 10/14/36:** The first Social Security field office opens in Austin, Texas.
- 11/09/36:** The Baltimore office for record-keeping operations opens in the Candler Building.
- 11/24/36:** Applications for Social Security account numbers are first distributed by the post office.
- 01/01/37:** Workers begin to acquire credits toward old-age insurance benefits. Payroll taxes are collected for the first time.

- 01/37:** The first applications for benefits are filed. Ernest Ackerman, a retired Cleveland motorman, is among the first to apply.
- 03/11/37:** The first lump sum, one-time Social Security benefits are paid.
- 07/01/39:** Under the Federal Reorganization Act of 1939, the Social Security Board is made part of the newly established Federal Security Agency (FSA).
- 08/10/39:** The Social Security Amendments of 1939 broadens the program to include dependents and survivors benefits.
- 01/31/40:** Ida May Fuller becomes the first person to receive an old-age monthly benefit check.
- 07/16/46:** Under the President's Reorganization Plan of 1946, the Social Security Board is abolished, and the Social Security Administration is established. Arthur J. Altmeyer is appointed as the first commissioner.
- 08/28/50:** President Truman signs the 1950 Social Security Amendments.
- 04/11/53:** President Eisenhower abolishes the FSA and creates a new Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW). Social Security is made part of this new cabinet agency.
- 09/01/54:** Social Security Amendments establishes a disability "freeze" to help prevent the erosion of a disabled worker's benefits.
- 08/01/56:** The Social Security Act is amended to provide monthly benefits to permanently and totally disabled workers aged 50-64 and for adult children of deceased or retired workers, if disabled before age 18.

- 06/30/61:** The Social Security Amendments of 1961 are signed by President John Kennedy, permitting all workers to elect reduced retirement at age 62.
- 07/30/65:** President Johnson signs the Medicare bill at the Truman Presidential Library in Independence, Missouri.
- 10/12/66:** President Johnson visits Social Security headquarters to participate in the 15th Annual Honor Awards Ceremony. He is the only president to visit.
- 07/01/72:** President Nixon signs into law P.L. 92-336, which authorizes a 20 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), effective September 1972, and establishes the procedures for issuing automatic annual COLAs beginning in 1975.
- 10/30/72:** President Nixon signed the Social Security Amendments of 1972 into law—creating the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program.
- 01/01/74:** The SSI program goes into operation as a result of the Social Security Amendments of 1972.
- 05/04/80:** The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) replaces the newly abolished HEW. Social Security becomes part of HHS at this time.
- 06/09/80:** President Carter signs the Social Security Amendments of 1980. Major provisions involve greater work incentives for disabled Social Security and SSI beneficiaries and continuing disability reviews.
- 08/13/81:** The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981 makes numerous changes in Social Security, SSI, and AFDC. These include: a phasing out of student's benefits; stopping young parents

benefits when a child reached 16; limiting the lump-sum death payment and changes in the minimum benefit.

- 01/20/83:** The National Commission on Social Security Reform sends its recommendations for resolving the Social Security program's financial problems to the president and Congress.
- 04/20/83:** President Reagan signs into law the Social Security Amendments of 1983.
- 10/09/84:** The Disability Benefits Reform Act of 1984 is signed by President Reagan.
- 06/06/86:** President Reagan signs the Federal Employees' Retirement System (FERS) Act, which establishes Social Security coverage for federal employees hired after December 31, 1983.
- 10/01/88:** Social Security's nationwide 800-number telephone service is implemented.
- 05/17/94:** Social Security's Internet site, Social Security Online, is launched.
- 03/31/95:** Social Security becomes an independent agency.
- 04/19/95:** The Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Okla., is bombed, killing 168 people, including 16 Social Security employees.
- 08/22/96:** President Clinton signs the welfare reform bill.
- 12/98:** The first White House Conference on Social Security is held in Washington, D.C., on December 8 and 9, 1998.
- 10/01/99:** Social Security begins annual mailing of the *Social Security Statement* to all workers age 25 and over.
- 12/17/99:** President Clinton signs the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999.

- 04/07/00:** President Clinton signs into law a bill eliminating the Retirement Earnings Test for those beneficiaries at or above full retirement age.
- 11/02/00:** Social Security announces the availability of its new online application process for Social Security retirement claims.
- 05/02/01:** President Bush announces the appointment of a 16member bipartisan President's Commission to Strengthen Social Security.
- 12/11/01:** The President's Commission to Strengthen Social Security holds its final meeting and votes unanimously to approve the Draft Final Report. The Commission offers three possible scenarios for how personal accounts might be introduced into the Social Security program.
- 02/05/02:** The *Ticket to Work* program is launched officially in the first 13 states.
- 02/19/02:** New updated rules, better reflecting the state of medical science, take effect regarding the evaluation of disabilities based on problems of the musculoskeletal system (the most common type of disability under Social Security).
- 04/15/02:** The U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Reform, Subcommittee on Government Efficiency, Financial Management and Intergovernmental Relations, gives the Social Security Administration the highest grade in the federal government for its financial management practices.
- 06-07/02:** Social Security implements the first of several policies to protect the integrity of the Social Security number and to help ensure that only those who should receive a number do so. In June, Social Security begins verifying all birth

records submitted by U.S.-born citizens age 1 or older applying for numbers with the state bureaus of vital statistics. In July, the agency begins verifying all immigration documents for noncitizens requesting numbers with the Department of Homeland Security.

- 01/06/03:** Social Security implements a new service for small business owners, providing electronic wage reporting capabilities to businesses with 20 or fewer employees.
- 12/08/03:** President Bush signs into law the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003. The Act requires Social Security to undertake additional Medicare-related responsibilities. Social Security and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services begin collaborating to provide persons with limited income and resources extra help paying for their prescription drugs. Social Security's role in this partnership is to help the public understand how they could qualify and apply.
- 03/02/04:** President Bush signs into law H.R. 743, the Social Security Protection Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-203). This law contains more than 50 main provisions, many affecting the conduct of representative payees under the law, as well as a wide variety of other administrative and technical matters.
- 07/15/04:** President Bush signs into law H.R. 1731, the Identity Theft Penalty Enhancement Act, which imposes criminal penalties for theft of another person's identity, including for purposes of getting Social Security-related benefits.

- 01/26/05:** Mississippi becomes the first state to implement Social Security’s new electronic disability application process under its eDib initiative.
- 5/23/07:** At a hearing before the Senate Finance Committee, Social Security Administration Commissioner Michael J. Astrue presents his initiatives to reduce the hearings backlogs and to address the shortfalls of the disability determination process.
- 9/4/07:** The one-millionth online claim for Social Security retirement benefits is taken via the agency’s internet-based application.
- 10/15/07:** The first official “baby boomer” filed a claim for Social Security retirement benefits. Kathleen Casey-Kirschling, who was born one second after midnight on January 1, 1946, filed her claim online at an event hosted by Social Security at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. Although she would not be eligible for benefits until January 2008, the agency encourages applicants to file up to three months before their first month of eligibility.
- 7/21/08:** Social Security’s web-based *Retirement Estimator* becomes available. The *Estimator* provides immediate and personalized benefit estimates online to help people plan for their retirement. The *Estimator* provides accurate benefit estimates for those nearing retirement age. For younger workers, it provides valuable information to help them plan and save for their retirement.
- 10/27/08:** Commissioner Astrue announces the national rollout of the Compassionate Allowances initiative, a way to expedite the processing of disability claims for applicants whose medical conditions are so severe that their conditions

obviously meet Social Security's standards. Social Security launches this expedited decision process with 50 conditions. Over time, more diseases and conditions are added.

- 6/22/09:** Commissioner Astrue announces the agency plans to open a new teleservice center (TSC) in Jackson, Tennessee—the first new call center opened by Social Security in more than a decade.
- 12/15/09:** President Obama signs H.R. 4218, the No Social Security Benefits for Prisoners Act of 2009, which became Public Law 111-115. The bill prohibits the payment of any retroactive Title II and Title XVI benefits to people while they are in prison, are in violation of conditions of their parole or probation, or are fleeing to avoid prosecution for a felony or a crime punishable by sentence of more than one year. Under the bill, Social Security wouldn't pay these retroactive benefits until the beneficiary is no longer a prisoner, probation or parole violator, or fugitive felon.
- 1/22/10:** Commissioner Astrue announces that the agency is making new data about beneficiaries and the agency's disability and hearing processes available to the public. The new data supports the president's Transparency and Open Government initiative and is available at www.data.gov.
- 6/25/11:** The agency changes its procedures for issuing new Social Security numbers. The shift to a random procedure means that the area number will no longer be assigned any geographical significance. Unused area numbers will also become usable. This shift will allow the issuance of more Social

Security numbers before the stock of potential numbers is depleted.

5/1/12:

The **my Social Security** portal featuring the *Social Security Statement* is launched online at **www.ssa.gov/myaccount**.



Agency Organizational History

This list summarizes the major organizational changes to the agency over the years:

The Social Security Board is created

The Social Security Administration began life as the Social Security Board (SSB). SSB was created at the moment President Roosevelt inked his signature on the Social Security Act on August 14, 1935. SSB was an entirely new entity, with no staff, no facilities, and no budget. Existing agencies donated the initial staff, and the Federal Emergency Relief Administration provided a temporary budget. The board consisted of three executives appointed by the president, and such staff as they needed to hire.

The Federal Security Agency absorbs the Board

On July 1, 1939, the Social Security Board lost its independent agency status when the new sub-cabinet level Federal Security Agency (FSA) was created. FSA encompassed SSB, the Public Health Service, the Office of Education, the Civilian Conservation Corps, and the U.S. Employment Service.

Agency is created

On July 16, 1946, under the President's Reorganization Plan of 1946, SSB was replaced by the Social Security Administration under the leadership of a Commissioner. Arthur Altmeyer, who had been chairman of the SSB, became Social Security's first Commissioner.

HEW replaces the Federal Security Agency

On April 11, 1953, President Eisenhower abolished FSA and created a new Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW). Social Security was made part of this new cabinet agency.

HEW replaced by HHS

On May 4, 1980, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) replaced HEW. Until it returned to its original status as an independent agency, Social Security was a major part of HHS.

Social Security becomes an independent agency

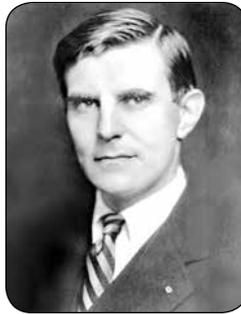
Throughout the years, arguments had been made that Social Security should be returned to independent agency status. This debate was given impetus in 1981 when the National Commission on Social Security recommended that the agency once again become an independent Social Security Board. The 1983 National Commission on Social Security Reform (a.k.a., the Greenspan Commission) again raised this issue and recommended a special study be commissioned of the matter. This special study was completed in 1984, and it outlined several options for making Social Security an independent agency. This led to numerous legislative proposals in the ensuing years, and in 1994 the legislation passed both houses of Congress unanimously making Social Security, once again, an independent agency.

President Clinton signed the bill on August 15, 1994—59 years and one day after FDR signed the original Act. The change took effect on March 31, 1995.

Social Security Board members

From 1935 until 1946, a three-person executive group known as the Social Security Board held responsibility for the Social Security program. All three held equal voting status in the board's decisions, though one of the members was designated as the chairman.

During this 11-year period, six different individuals were members of the Social Security Board.



*John G. Winant
Board Chairman
1935-1937*



*Arthur J. Altmeyer
Member 1935-1937
Chairman 1937-1946*



*Vincent M. Miles
Member
1935-1937*



*Mary W. Dewson
Member
1937-1938*



*George E. Bigge
Member
1937-1946*



*Ellen S. Woodward
Member
1938-1946*

Social Security Commissioners

Since 1946, a Commissioner has headed the Social Security Administration.

As of 2015, 26 men and women have served as the permanent or acting Commissioner of Social Security.

*(*Denotes acting status.)*



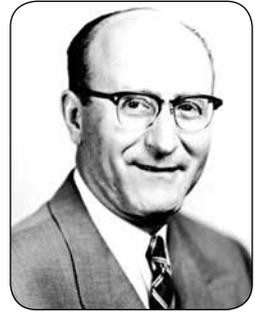
*Arthur J. Altmeyer
7/46-4/53*



William L. Mitchell
4/53-11/53*



*John W. Tramburg
11/53-8/54*



*Charles I. Schottland
8/54-2/59*



*William L. Mitchell
2/59-4/62*



*Robert M. Ball
4/62-3/73*



Arthur E. Hess
3/73-10/73*



James B. Cardwell
10/73-12/77



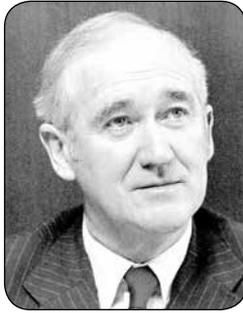
*Don I. Wortman**
12/77-10/78



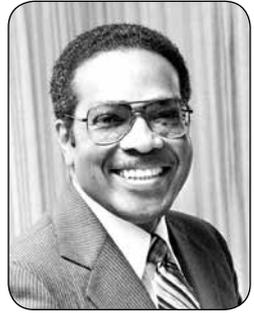
Stanford G. Ross
10/78-1/80



*Herbert R. Doggette, Jr.**
1/80-1/80



William J. Driver
1/80-1/81



*Herbert R. Doggette, Jr.**
1/81-5/81



John A. Svahn
5/81-9/83



*Martha A. McSteen**
9/83-6/86



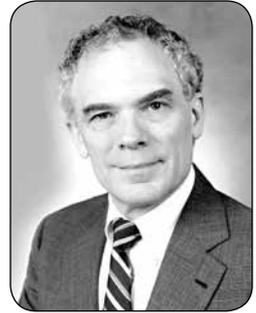
Dorcas R. Hardy
6/86-8/89



Gwendolyn S. King
8/89-10/92



*Louis D. Enoff **
10/92-7/93



*Lawrence H. Thompson**
7/93-10/93



Shirley S. Chater
10/93-3/97



*John J. Callahan**
3/97-9/97



Kenneth S. Apfel
9/97-1/01



*William A. Halter**
1/01-3/01



*Larry G. Massanari**
3/01-11/01



Jo Anne B. Barnhart
11/01-1/07



*Linda S. McMahon**
1/07-2/07



*Michael J.
Astrue 2/07-2/13*



*Carolyn W. Colvin**
2/13-present

Contacting Social Security

Visit our website

At our website, www.socialsecurity.gov, you can:

- Create a **my Social Security** account to review your *Social Security Statement*, verify your earnings, print a benefit verification letter, change your direct deposit information, get a replacement 1099/1042S, and more;
- Apply for Extra Help with Medicare prescription drug plan costs;
- Apply for retirement, disability, and Medicare benefits;
- Get the address of your local Social Security office;
- Request a replacement Medicare card;
- Find copies of our publications; and
- Get answers to frequently asked questions.

Call us

Call us toll-free at **1-800-772-1213** or at our TTY number, **1-800-325-0778**, if you are deaf or hard of hearing. We provide general information by automated phone service 24 hours a day. You can also use this automated response system to tell us a new address or request a replacement Medicare card. We can answer your case specific questions from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. You'll generally have a shorter wait time if you call after Tuesday.

We treat all calls confidentially, and a second Social Security representative monitors some telephone calls, because we want to make sure you receive accurate and courteous service.

SOCIAL SECURITY



SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

www.socialsecurity.gov

SSA Publication No. 21-059

ICN 440000

Unit of Issue - HD (one hundred)

May 2015 (Recycle prior editions)