



Know Your Social Security Act

Introduced by Representatives John B. Larson (D-CT) and Vern Buchanan (R-FL)

The Social Security Statement

The *Social Security Statement* provides Americans with information about their Social Security earnings, contributions, and future benefits. The *Statement* informs individuals about their Social Security benefits, helps them plan for retirement, and allows workers to review and correct their earnings records to ensure their future benefits will be computed correctly.

To ensure that Americans know their Social Security earnings and benefits, in 1989 and 1990, Congress enacted on a bipartisan basis requirements for the Social Security Administration (SSA) to provide an annual *Social Security Statement* to all individuals ages 25 and older who have paid into Social Security but are not yet receiving Social Security benefits. Congress directed SSA to mail *Statements* to all individuals “for whom a current mailing address can be determined”. Congress also directed the Internal Revenue Service, upon written request of the Commissioner of Social Security, to disclose the mailing address of any taxpayer who is entitled to receive a *Statement* to SSA for the purposes of mailing the *Statement*. (*Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Acts of 1989 and 1990*, P.L. 101-239 and P.L. 101-508)

For years, SSA complied with the law, with successful results. Research found that when SSA mails annual *Statements*, most people – even younger workers – read their *Statement* carefully, value it highly, and find it helpful for retirement planning. Surveys have found most individuals prefer to receive their *Statement* by mail, rather than electronically.

The Issue

Despite the law and the clear benefits of *Statements*, starting in Fiscal Year 2011 SSA has failed to mail annual *Statements* as intended by Congress, citing limited operating budgets.

Currently, SSA only mails *Statements* to individuals ages 60 and older who are not receiving Social Security benefits. In addition, even among this limited group of seniors, SSA only mails *Statements* to individuals who have not registered for a *mySocialSecurity* online account. As a result, seniors who once signed up for an online account but have not recently viewed their *Statement* do not receive a *Statement*. A review by SSA’s Inspector General, completed at the request of former Ways and Means Committee Social Security Subcommittee Chairman Sam Johnson and Rep. Vern Buchanan, found that only about two out of five individuals with a *mySocialSecurity* account (17 million out of 39 million individuals) accessed their *Statement* online in Fiscal Year 2018.

In Fiscal Year 2020 SSA mailed *Statements* to about 19 million individuals – out of an estimated 180 million workers with covered earnings.

The Bill

The *Know Your Social Security Act* clarifies that SSA must provide by mail an annual *Social Security Statement* to all workers ages 25 and older with covered earnings, who are not receiving Social Security benefits. The bill provides individuals the option to receive their annual statement electronically, rather than by mail, if they prefer to do so. By law, an individual may also request a *Statement* at any time during the year. The bill requires SSA to provide these on-demand *Statements* by mail, unless an individual chooses electronic delivery for that one-time request. In the previous Congress, the Committee on Ways and Means approved the bill unanimously.