

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SOCIAL SECURITY

Issued on Social Security's 65th Anniversary
August 2000



*President Franklin D. Roosevelt signs the original
Social Security Act on August 14, 1935.*

For more information about the history of Social Security, see our
Internet site at <http://www.ssa.gov/history>

'S STATEMENT



One of the great social and economic successes of the early 20th century was the effort to enact meaningful social insurance legislation. In the 1930s, being old all too often meant being poor. Many men and women at that time faced what was termed “the stark terror of penniless, helpless old age.” The Social Security Act of 1935 helped to change all of that. When President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the original Act, he said, “The civilization of the past hundred years, with its startling industrial changes, has tended more and more to make life insecure. Young people have come to wonder what would be their lot when they came to old age.” Today, thanks largely to Social Security, people know that they will have a dependable foundation of income when they retire; only about 11 percent of older Americans now fall below the poverty line.

Equally important, in the years since 1935, the Social Security program has been broadened to include survivors benefits, disability benefits, health-care benefits and automatic cost-of-living adjustments. It is a dynamic program that has changed over time to meet changing circumstances. And, largely because of this responsiveness to changing needs, the Social Security program has also become the most successful, most popular domestic government program in the nation’s history.

The 21st century brings with it new challenges, including an aging nation and a continuing need to provide income security for workers and their families in retirement, or in the event of the disability or death of a wage earner. I believe that this brief history of Social Security will help provide perspective and understanding about the role of social insurance in American life, and help us shape a program that is responsive to the changing needs of a new century.

Kenneth S. Apfel

Kenneth S. Apfel
Commissioner of Social Security

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY

THE PROBLEM OF ECONOMIC INSECURITY

Social Security works because it speaks to a universal human need. All people throughout human history have faced the uncertainties brought on by death, disability and old age. Prior to the turn of the 20th century, the majority of people in the United States lived and worked on farms and economic security was provided by the extended family. However, this arrangement changed as America underwent the Industrial Revolution. The extended family and the family farm as sources of economic security became less common. Then, the Great Depression triggered a crisis in the nation's economic life. It was against this backdrop that the Social Security Act emerged.



Frances Perkins

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. The committee was instructed to study the entire problem of economic insecurity and to make recommendations that would serve as the basis for legislative consideration by the Congress.

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 the differences were

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resolved and the Social Security Act was signed into law on August 14, 1935. In addition to several provisions for general welfare, the new Act created a social insurance program designed to pay retired workers age 65 or older a continuing income after retirement.



First meeting of Social Security Board, 8/23/35. Left to right: Altmeyer, Winant and Miles.

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. The SSB was faced with the tasks of providing employers, employees and the public with information on how earnings were to be reported, what benefits were available and how they were to be provided. In addition, sites for field installations had to be chosen and personnel to staff these offices had to be selected and trained.

The monumental first task was the need to register employers and workers by January 1, 1937, when workers would begin acquiring credits toward old-age insurance benefits. Since the SSB did not have the resources

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

*First SSN account established for
John D. Sweeney, Jr. of New Rochelle,
New York.
Lowest number ever issued
(SSN 001-01-0001) to Grace Dorothy
Owen of Concord, New Hampshire.*



Postmen in New York City distributing SSN applications in November 1936.



FIRST PAYMENTS

Under the 1935 law, monthly benefits were to start in 1942. From 1937 until 1942, Social Security was to pay benefits to retirees in the form of a single, lump-sum refund payment. The earliest reported applicant for a lump-sum refund was a retired Cleveland motorman named Ernest Ackerman, who retired one day after the Social

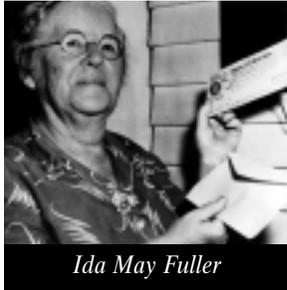
Security program began. During his one day of participation in the program, a nickel was withheld from Mr. Ackerman's pay for Social Security, and, upon retiring, he received a lump-sum payment of 17 cents. The average lump-sum payment during this period was \$58.06. The smallest payment ever made was for 5 cents.

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 new categories of benefits: payments to the spouse and minor children of a retired worker (so-called dependents benefits) and survivors benefits paid to the family in the event of the premature death of the worker. This change transformed Social Security from a retirement program for individuals into a family-based economic security program. The 1939 Amendments also increased benefit amounts and accelerated the start of monthly benefit payments from 1942 to 1940.

MONTHLY BENEFITS

Payments 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 over \$22,000 in benefits.

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. Only about 50% of America's workers were covered under the program at that time. In 1950 major amendments were enacted. These 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

Most people are aware that there are annual increases in Social Security benefits to offset the effects of inflation on fixed incomes. These increases, known as Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLAs), are such an accepted feature of the program that it is difficult to imagine Social Security without them. But in fact, when Ida May Fuller received her first \$22.54 benefit payment in January of 1940, this was the amount she could expect to receive for life. It was not until the 1950 Amendments that Congress legislated the first COLA— a 77 percent increase.

From that point on, benefits were increased only when Congress enacted special legislation.

In 1972, the law was changed to provide, beginning in 1975, for automatic annual COLAs based on the

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annual increase in consumer prices. No longer do beneficiaries have to await a special act of Congress to receive a benefit increase and no longer does inflation drain value from Social Security benefits.

Social Security Benefit Increases 1950-1999			
Effective Date	Percent Increase	Effective Date	Percent Increase
9/50	77.0	6/82	7.4
9/52	12.5	12/83	3.5
9/54	13.0	12/84	3.5
1/59	7.0	12/85	3.1
1/65	7.0	12/86	1.3
2/68	13.0	12/87	4.2
1/70	15.0	12/88	4.0
1/71	10.0	12/89	4.7
9/72	20.0	12/90	5.4
3/74	7.0	12/91	3.7
6/74	11.0	12/92	3.0
6/75	8.0	12/93	2.6
6/76	6.4	12/94	2.8
6/77	5.9	12/95	2.6
6/78	6.5	12/96	2.9
6/79	9.9	12/97	2.1
6/80	14.3	12/98	1.3
6/81	11.2	12/99	2.4

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.

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On August 1, 1956, the Social Security Act was amended to provide benefits to disabled workers aged 50-65 and disabled adult children. Over the next 2 years, Congress broadened the scope of the program, permitting disabled workers under age 50 and their dependents to qualify for benefits, and eventually disabled workers at any age could qualify.



bill.

MEDICARE & OTHER CHANGES

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

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 3 years of the



President Johnson signs Medicare, in the presence of former President Harry Truman.

program. SSA would continue to have responsibility for all aspects of the Medicare program until a 1977 reorganization created the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA). HCFA assumed administrative responsibility for Medicare at that time.

SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME

In the original 1935 Social Security Act, programs were introduced for needy aged and blind individuals and, in 1950, needy disabled individuals were added. These three programs were known as the “adult categories” 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% 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 the Social Security Administration (SSA) assume responsibility for the adult categories. In the Social Security Amendments of 1972, Congress federalized the adult categories by creating the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program and assigned responsibility for it to the SSA.

MAJOR PROGRAM CHANGES SINCE 1980

The Social Security Amendments of 1980 made many changes in the disability program. Most of these changes focused on various work incentive provisions for both Social Security and SSI disability benefits. The 1980 Amendments also required SSA to conduct periodic reviews of current disability beneficiaries to certify their continuing eligibility. This was to become a massive workload and one that was controversial. 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.

In the early 1980s the Social Security program faced a serious financing crisis. President Ronald Reagan



President Reagan signs 1983 Amendments.

appointed a blue-ribbon panel, known as the Greenspan Commission, to study the financing issues and make recommendations for legislative changes. The final bill, signed into law in 1983, made numerous changes in the Social Security and Medicare programs, including the taxation of Social Security benefits; the first coverage of federal employees; raising the retirement age starting in 2000; and increasing the reserves in the Social Security Trust Funds.

Under 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.

In 1996, legislation changed the rules for qualifying for disability benefits. New applicants for Social Security or SSI disability benefits could no longer be eligible for benefits if drug addiction or alcoholism was a material factor in their disability.

“Welfare reform” legislation, signed by President Clinton in August 1996, terminated SSI eligibility for most non-citizens (this provision was scaled-back in 1997 legislation). Also the eligibility rules for awarding SSI disability benefits to children were tightened.

On December 17, 1999, President Clinton signed the “Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999.” This law provides disability beneficiaries with a voucher they may use to purchase vocational rehabilitation services, employment services, and other support services from an employment network of their choice. In addition to allowing beneficiaries to purchase vocational services, the law provides incentive payments to providers for successful rehabilitations in which the beneficiary returns to work. The new provisions also provide a number of safeguards to the beneficiaries to protect their benefits and health. Taken together, the Ticket to Work initiative seeks to shift the emphasis in the disability program away from mere

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maintenance of benefits more toward rehabilitating the disabled and assisting them in returning to productive work.

On April 7, 2000, President Clinton signed into law H.R. 5, "The Senior Citizens' Freedom to Work Act of 2000," eliminating the Retirement Earnings Test (RET) for beneficiaries at or above Normal Retirement Age (NRA). (The RET still applies to beneficiaries below NRA.) This allowed approximately 900,000 people who were collecting benefits but also working to not have their benefits reduced because of work.



President Clinton signs "Ticket to Work" bill at the FDR Memorial in Washington, D.C.



President Clinton signs bill repealing RET.



Each American President has strongly supported the Social Security program.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT “We can never insure one-hundred percent of the population against one-hundred percent of the hazards and vicissitudes of life. But we have tried to frame a law which will give some measure of protection to the average citizen and to his family against the loss of a job and against poverty-ridden old age. This law, too, represents a cornerstone in a structure which is being built, but is by no means complete.... It is... a law that will take care of human needs and at the same time provide for the United States an economic structure of vastly greater soundness.” — *August 14, 1935*

HARRY S. TRUMAN “Social Security... is not a dole or a device for giving everybody something for nothing. True Social Security must consist of rights which are earned rights — guaranteed by the law of the land.” — *August 13, 1945*

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER We will... endeavor to administer the disability [program] efficiently and effectively, [and]... to help rehabilitate the disabled so that they may return to useful employments.... I am hopeful that this new law... will advance the economic security of the American people.” — *August 1, 1956*

JOHN F. KENNEDY “The Social Security program plays an important part in providing for families, children, and older persons in times of stress. But it cannot remain static. Changes in our population, in our working habits, and in our standard of living require constant revision.” — *June 30, 1961*

PRESIDENTIAL QUOTES

LYNDON B. JOHNSON “One of the most urgent orders of business at this time is the enactment of hospital insurance for the aged through Social Security to help older people meet the high costs of illness without jeopardizing their economic independence.” — *February 9, 1964*

RICHARD M. NIXON “I have today signed [legislation which]... constitutes a major breakthrough for older Americans, for it says at last that inflation-proof Social Security benefits are theirs as a matter of right....” — *July 1, 1972*

GERALD R. FORD “We must begin by insuring that the Social Security system is beyond challenge. [It is] a vital obligation each generation has to those who have worked hard and contributed to it all their lives.”
— *February 9, 1976*

JIMMY E. CARTER “The Social Security program...represents our commitment as a society to the belief that workers should not live in dread that a disability, death, or old age could leave them or their families destitute.” — *December 20, 1977*

RONALD W. REAGAN “[This law] assures the elderly that America will always keep the promises made in troubled times a half century ago.... [The Social Security Amendments of 1983 are] a monument to the spirit of compassion and commitment that unites us as a people.”
— *April 20, 1983*

GEORGE H.W. BUSH “To every American out there on Social Security, to every American supporting that system today, and to everyone counting on it when they retire, we made a promise to you, and we are going to keep it.” — *January 31, 1990*

WILLIAM J. CLINTON “Social Security...reflects some of our deepest values — the duties we owe to our parents, the duties we owe to each other when we’re differently situated in life, the duties we owe to our children and our grandchildren. Indeed, it reflects our determination to move forward across generations and across the income divides in our country, as one America.”
— *February 9, 1998*

THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL SECURITY

During the 1990s, Social Security faced long-term challenges. The 2000 Trustees Report stated Social Security could pay full benefits until 2037, but the standard 75-year test of actuarial balance was not met.

A major impetus to the public debate on Social Security reform came in January 1998 when President Clinton announced in his State of the Union Address that we should “save Social Security first.” The President also announced a series of forums around the country during the course of the year to engage the citizenry in an informed public debate, culminating in the first-ever White House Conference on Social Security in December 1998. Numerous proposals were introduced, suggesting strong interest in dealing with the long-term challenges facing the program.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL SECURITY TODAY

Social Security has grown to become an essential facet of modern life. One in six Americans receives a Social Security benefit, and about 98 percent of all workers are in jobs covered by Social Security. Social Security benefits comprise about 5% of the nation’s total economic output. From 1940, when slightly more than 222,000 people received monthly Social Security benefits, until today, when almost 45 million people receive

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such benefits, Social Security has grown steadily. And Social Security benefits provide income security not just to the elderly. Nearly 1 in 3 beneficiaries are not retirees.

The SSI program, meanwhile, provides needed income support to over 6 million recipients, 31% of whom are aged individuals; 56% disabled adults; and 13% disabled children.

SOCIAL SECURITY			SSI		
<i>Year</i>	<i>Beneficiaries</i>	<i>Dollars (b)</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Beneficiaries (c)</i>	<i>Dollars (d)</i>
1937	53,236 (a)	\$1,278,000	1974	3,996,064	\$5,096,813,000
1938	213,670 (a)	\$10,478,000	1975	4,314,275	\$5,716,072,000
1939	174,839 (a)	\$13,896,000	1980	4,142,017	\$7,714,640,000
1940	222,488	\$35,000,000	1985	4,138,021	\$10,749,938,000
1950	3,477,243	\$961,000,000	1990	4,817,127	\$16,132,959,000
1960	14,844,589	\$11,245,000,000	1995	6,514,134	\$27,037,280,000
1970	26,228,629	\$31,863,000,000	1996	6,613,718	\$28,252,474,000
1980	35,584,955	\$120,511,000,000	1997	6,494,985	\$28,370,568,000
1990	39,832,125	\$247,796,000,000	1998	6,566,069	\$29,408,208,000
1995	43,387,259	\$332,553,000,000	1999	6,556,634	\$30,106,132,000
1996	43,736,836	\$347,088,000,000	<i>a. Recipients of one-time lump-sum payments.</i> <i>b. Cash benefits only.</i> <i>c. Recipients of Federally-administered payments only.</i> <i>d. Includes both Federal payment and Federally-administered State supplementation payments.</i>		
1997	43,971,086	\$361,970,000,000			
1998	44,245,731	\$374,990,000,000			
1999	44,595,624	\$385,768,000,000			

TES IN THE HISTORY OF SOCIAL SECURITY

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

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- 06/08/34** Federal legislation to promote economic security was recommended in President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Message to Congress.
 - 06/29/34** President Roosevelt created 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 were introduced in the 74th Congress.
 - 04/19/35** The Social Security Act was passed in the House of Representatives, 372 to 33.
 - 06/19/35** The Social Security Act was passed in the Senate by a vote of 77 to 6.
 - 08/14/35** The Social Security Act became law with President Roosevelt's signature.
 - 08/23/35** The Senate confirmed 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 was opened in Austin, Texas.
 - 11/09/36** The Baltimore office for record-keeping operations opened in the Candler Building.
 - 11/24/36** Applications for Social Security account numbers were distributed by the Post Office.

KEY DATES IN THE HISTORY OF SOCIAL SECURITY

- 01/01/37** Workers began to acquire credits toward old-age insurance benefits.
- 01/37** First applications for benefits filed. Ernest Ackerman, a retired Cleveland motorman, was among the first to apply.
- 02/19/37** President Roosevelt accepted the resignation of John G. Winant from the Social Security Board and appointed Arthur J. Altmeyer as the new Chairman.
- 03/11/37** First Social Security benefits paid (one-time payment only).
- 07/01/39** Under the Federal Reorganization Act of 1939, the Social Security Board was made part of the newly established Federal Security Agency.
- 08/03/39** Arthur J. Altmeyer was reappointed to a 6-year term as the Chairman of the Social Security Board.
- 08/10/39** The Social Security Amendments of 1939 broadened the program to include dependents and survivors benefits.
- 01/31/40** Ida May Fuller became the first person to receive an old-age monthly benefit check.
- 11/19/45** In a special message to Congress, President Truman proposed a comprehensive, prepaid medical insurance plan for all people through the Social Security system.
- 07/16/46** Under the President's Reorganization Plan of 1946, the Social Security Board was abolished and the Social Security Administration was established. Arthur J. Altmeyer was appointed as the first Commissioner.
- 08/28/50** President Truman signed the 1950 Social Security Amendments.
- 09/01/54** Social Security Amendments established a disability "freeze" to help prevent the erosion of a disabled worker's benefits.

KEY DATES IN THE HISTORY OF SOCIAL SECURITY

- 08/01/56** The Social Security Act was 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 were signed by President John Kennedy, permitting all workers to elect reduced retirement at age 62.
- 07/30/65** President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Medicare Bill in the presence of former President Truman who proposed this legislation in his message to Congress in 1945.
- 10/12/66** President Johnson visited the SSA's headquarters to participate in the 15th Annual Honor Awards Ceremony — the first visit by a President.
- 12/30/69** President Nixon signed the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act. Monthly cash benefits were provided coal miners who became totally disabled because of Black Lung disease, and for their dependents and survivors.
- 07/01/72** President Nixon signed into law P.L. 92-336 which authorized a 20% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), effective 9/92, and established the procedures for issuing automatic annual COLAs beginning in 1975.
- 10/30/72** Social Security Amendments of 1972 signed into law by President Nixon — creating the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program.
- 1/19/73** The Administration Building at SSA headquarters was renamed the Arthur J. Altmeyer Building, in memory of the late Commissioner.
- 01/01/74** SSI program went into operation as a result of the Social Security Amendments of 1972.

KEY DATES IN THE HISTORY OF SOCIAL SECURITY

- 03/09/77** HEW reorganization plan published in Federal Register, creating the Health Care Financing Administration to manage the Medicare and Medicaid programs.
- 06/09/80** President Carter signed the Social Security Amendments of 1980. Major provisions involved greater work incentives for disabled Social Security and SSI beneficiaries.
- 08/13/81** The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981 made major changes in Social Security, SSI and AFDC. These included: 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 sent its recommendations for resolving the Social Security program's financial problems to the President and Congress.
- 04/20/83** President Reagan signed into law the Social Security Amendments of 1983.
- 10/09/84** Disability Benefits Reform Act of 1984 signed by President Reagan.
- 08/14/85** Social Security celebrates its 50th Anniversary.
- 06/06/86** President Reagan signed the Federal Employees' Retirement System (FERS) Act, which established Social Security coverage for federal employees hired after December 31, 1983.
- 10/01/88** Nationwide 800 number service implemented.
- 02/20/90** The Supreme Court held in *Sullivan vs. Zebley* that substantial parts of the SSI regulation on determining disability for children are inconsistent with the Social Security Act.

KEY DATES IN THE HISTORY OF SOCIAL SECURITY

- 05/17/94** SSA's Internet site was launched on the World-Wide Web (SSA Online at <http://www.ssa.gov>).
- 03/31/95** SSA became an independent agency.
- 04/19/95** The Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, was bombed, killing 168 individuals, including 16 SSA employees.
- 08/22/96** President Clinton signs welfare reform bill.
- 09/28/97** Kenneth S. Apfel sworn-in as Commissioner of Social Security.
- 01/27/98** In his State of the Union address, President Clinton states, "Save Social Security First."
- 12/08-09/98** The first-ever White House Conference on Social Security was held in Washington, D.C.
- 10/01/99** SSA begins annual mailing of Social Security Statement to all workers age 25 and over.
- 11/22/99** William A. Halter was formally sworn-in as Deputy Commissioner of Social Security, and James G. Huse, Jr. was sworn-in as Inspector General of Social Security.
- 12/17/99** President Clinton signed the "Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999."
- 04/07/00** President Clinton signed into law a bill eliminating the Retirement Earnings Test (RET) for those beneficiaries at or above Normal Retirement Age.

'S ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY

The organization with administrative responsibility for the Social Security program is the Social Security Administration. This table summarizes the major organizational changes to SSA over the years:

- The Social Security Board is Created** The Social Security Administration (SSA) began life as the Social Security Board (SSB). The SSB was created at the moment President Roosevelt inked his signature on the Social Security Act (**August 14, 1935**). The SSB was an entirely new entity, with no staff, no facilities and no budget. The initial personnel were donated from existing agencies, and a temporary budget was obtained from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. The Board itself consisted of three executives appointed by the President and such staff as they needed to hire.
- The Federal Security Agency Absorbs the Board** On **7/1/39** the Social Security Board lost its independent agency status when the new sub-cabinet level Federal Security Agency was created. The FSA encompassed the SSB, the Public Health Service, the Office of Education, the Civilian Conservation Corps, and the U.S. Employment Service
- SSA is Created** On **7/16/46** the SSB was renamed the Social Security Administration under the President's Reorganization Plan of 1946. Arthur Altmeyer, who had been chairman of the Board of the SSB, became SSA's first Commissioner.

- HEW Replaces the Federal Security Agency** On **4/11/53** President Eisenhower abolished the FSA and created a new Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW). SSA was made part of this new cabinet agency.
- HEW Replaced by HHS** On **5/4/80** the Department of Health and Human Services replaced HEW. SSA was a major part of HHS until it returned to its original status as an independent agency.
- SSA Becomes an Independent Agency** Throughout the years, arguments had been made that SSA should be returned to independent agency status. This debate was given impetus in 1981 when the National Commission on Social Security recommended that SSA 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 SSA an independent agency. This led to numerous legislative proposals in the ensuing years and in 1994 the legislation passed both houses of Congress unanimously. 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, the Social Security program was the responsibility of a three-person executive board known as the Social Security Board. 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



George E. Bigge
Member 1937-1946



Mary W. Dewson
Member 1937-1938



Ellen S. Woodward
Member 1938-1946

SOCIAL SECURITY COMMISSIONERS

Since 1946, a Commissioner has headed the Social Security Administration. Up to the present, 20 men and women have served as the permanent or acting Commissioner of SSA.

*(*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

SOCIAL SECURITY COMMISSIONERS



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



James B. Cardwell
10/73-12/77



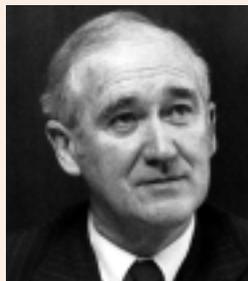
Don I. Wortman*
12/77-10/78



Stanford G. Ross
10/78-1/80



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



William J. Driver
1/80-1/81

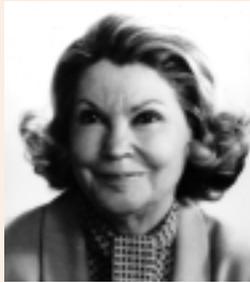
SOCIAL SECURITY COMMISSIONERS



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

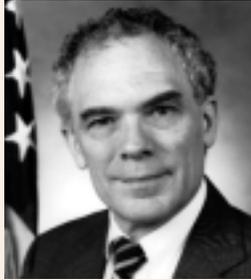


Gwendolyn S. King
8/89-10/92



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

SOCIAL SECURITY COMMISSIONERS



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-



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