

**Supporting Statement for Form SSA-581
Authorization to Obtain Earnings Data
From the Social Security Administration
OMB No. 0960-0602**

A. Justification

1. Introduction/Authoring Laws and Regulations

On occasion, organizations and agencies, both public and private, need to obtain detailed earnings information about specific Social Security Number (SSN)-holding wage earners for business purposes (e.g. pension funds, State agencies). Respondents use Form SSA-581 to identify the SSN holder whose information they wish to request, and to provide authorization from the SSN holder (when applicable). Section 205(c)(2)(A) of the *Social Security Act (Act)* requires SSA to provide this information when authorized to do so by the SSN holder in question.

2. Description of Collection

The Social Security Administration (SSA) uses the information provided on Form SSA-581 to: (1) identify the wage earner; (2) establish the period of earnings information requested; (3) verify the wage earner authorized SSA to release this information to the requesting party; and (4) produce the Itemized Statement of Earnings (SSA-1826). Generally, the SSA-581 is a one-time request; however, some organizations use the form annually to maintain private pension programs, while others use the form in litigation matters. The respondents are private businesses and other Federal agencies.

3. Use of Information Technology to Collect the Information

SSA did not create an electronic version of this form under the agency's Government Paperwork Elimination Act (GPEA) plan, because the *Tax Reform Act of 1976 (Public Law 94-455)* requires a wet signature from the SSN holder for SSA to release earnings data. SSA workgroups are performing planning and analysis to resolve the wet signature requirement and to automate the processing of Form SSA-581. In addition, the SSA-581 is not available as a print only PDF on SSA's website; rather, SSA sends the PDF file to the organizations via email or CDROM in effort to control and reduce unauthorized form use. Finally, only 24,000 respondents complete this form annually, which is less than the GPEA cut-off of 50,000.

4. Why We Cannot Use Duplicate Information

The nature of the information we collect and the manner in which we collect it preclude duplication. SSA does not use another collection instrument to obtain similar data.

5. Minimizing Burden on Small Respondents

This collection does not significantly affect small businesses or other small entities.

6. Consequence of Not Collection Information or Collecting it Less Frequently

If we did not use Form SSA-581, organizations and wage earners would have no way of requesting earnings data to administer private pension programs or resolve litigation matters, which would be a violation of Section 205(c)(2)(A) of the Act. Because we only collect the information on an as-needed basis, we cannot collect it less frequently. There are no technical or legal obstacles to burden reduction.

7. Special Circumstances

There are no special circumstances that would cause SSA to conduct this information collection in a manner inconsistent with 5 CFR 1320.5.

8. Solicitation of Public Comment and other Consultation with the Public

The 60-day advance Federal Register Notice published on February 21, 2017, at 82 FR 11293, and we received no public comments. SSA published the second Notice on April 26, 2017, at 82 FR 19304. If we receive comments in response to the 30-day Notice, we will forward them to OMB.

9. Payments or Gifts to Respondents

SSA does not provide payments or gifts to the respondents.

10. Assurances of Confidentiality

SSA protects and holds confidential the information it collects in accordance with 42 U.S.C. 1306, 20 CFR 401 and 402, 5 U.S.C. 552 (Freedom of Information Act), 5 U.S.C. 552a (Privacy Act of 1974), and OMB Circular No. A-130.

11. Justification for Sensitive Questions

The information collection does not contain any question of a sensitive nature.

12. Estimate of Public Reporting Burden

Approximately 24,000 beneficiaries take 2 minutes each to complete this form annually, resulting in an annual burden of 800 hours. This figure represents burden hours, and we did not calculate a separate cost burden.

13. Annual Cost to the Respondents (Other)

This collection does not impose a known cost burden on the respondents.

14. Annual Cost to Federal Government

The annual cost to the Federal Government is approximately \$26,384. This estimate is a projection of the costs for printing and distributing the form, as well as the personnel costs for processing the form.

15. Program Changes or Adjustments to the Information Collection Request

There are no changes to the public reporting burden.

16. Plans for Publication Information Collection Results

SSA will not publish the results of the information collection.

17. Displaying the OMB Approval Expiration Date

OMB granted SSA an exemption from the requirement to print the OMB expiration date on its program forms. SSA produces millions of public-use forms with life cycles exceeding those of an OMB approval. Since SSA does not periodically revise and reprint its public-use forms (e.g., on an annual basis), OMB granted this exemption so SSA would not have to destroy stocks of otherwise useable forms with expired OMB approval dates, avoiding Government waste.

18. Exceptions to Certification Statement

SSA is not requesting an exception to the certification requirements at 5 *CFR* 1320.9 and related provisions at 5 *CFR* 1320.8(b)(3).

B. Collections of Information Employing Statistical Methods

SSA does not use statistical methods for this information collection.