

**Supporting Statement for the
Electronic Benefit Verification (BEVE)
Internet Application
20 CFR 401.40
OMB No. 0960-0595**

A. Justification

1. Introduction/Authoring Laws and Regulations - The *Privacy Act of 1974* requires Federal agencies to permit individuals access to information pertaining to them. The Social Security Administration (SSA) provides information to beneficiaries on the status and amount of their benefits by authority of *Section 205(a)* of the *Social Security Act* and *20 CFR 401.40(b)* of the *Code of Federal Regulations*.

2. Description of Collection - SSA established the Electronic Benefit Verification (BEVE) Internet service to provide Social Security beneficiaries and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients the convenience of requesting a proof-of-income statement through the Internet. To obtain a BEVE, requesters must identify the type of information from SSA records they need by selecting one or more check blocks on the electronic request form. Requesters must also provide name and social security number (SSN) or claim number (the SSN they receive payments under; e.g., spouse's SSN) and several identifying elements required for authentication.

Beneficiaries and SSI recipients may request a BEVE letter for proof of income for obtaining housing, food stamps or other public services. Having verified the requester's identity, the information we collect is to create and provide the BEVE letter. SSA ensures appropriate confidentiality by mailing the BEVE to the address listed in existing SSA records for the requester. The respondents are Social Security title II and Medicare beneficiaries, and SSI recipients.

3. Use of Information Technology to Collect the Information - Consistent with the agency goal of providing excellent service and the *Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995*, the objective of this application is to provide Social Security beneficiaries and SSI recipients with an optional, less burdensome method of requesting a BEVE. SSA created the BEVE as an electronic application available through SSA's Internet website in March of 1999. Since the BEVE is accessible through the Internet, individuals can make a request at a time that is convenient and without any involvement of SSA employees.

4. Why We Cannot Use Duplicate Information - The nature of the information we are collecting and the manner in which we are collecting it preclude duplication. There is no other collection instrument SSA uses that collects similar data.

5. **Minimizing Burden on Small Respondents** - This information collection does not affect small businesses or other small entities.
6. **Consequence of Not Collecting Information or Collecting it Less Frequently** - Our failure to provide a timely BEVE could result in loss of services for the affected beneficiaries or SSI recipients. Making the service available electronically provides a requested service and added convenience to the public, and saves them the effort of phoning or visiting an SSA field office or teleservice center. There are no technical or legal obstacles preventing burden reduction.
7. **Special Circumstances** - There are no special circumstances that would cause SSA to collect the information in a manner inconsistent with 5 CFR 1320.5.
8. **Solicitation of Public Comment and Other Consultations with the Public** - SSA published the 60-day advance Federal Register Notice on January 28, 2010 at 76 FR 5233, and SSA received no public comments. We published the 30-day Notice on _____ at ____FR _____. If we receive any comments on the second Notice, we will forward them to OMB. We did not consult with members of the public.
9. **Payment of Gifts to Respondents** - SSA provides no payment 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.

SSA assures the confidentiality of the requester in several ways: We encrypt all electronic requests using the Secure Socket Layer (SSL) security protocol. SSL encryption helps to prevent a third party from reading the transmitted data even if intercepted. This protocol is an industry standard, and is used by banks such as Wells Fargo and Bank of America for Internet banking.

The application gives the requester adequate warnings the Internet is an open system and there is no absolute guarantee others will not intercept and decrypt the personal information they have entered. We advise the requester of alternative methods for requesting a BEVE, i.e., personal visit to an FO or telephone call to SSA's national 800 number.

We return the BEVE to the requester by U.S. mail using the address of record, rather than by way of the Internet (i.e., online).

The Privacy Act of 1974 protects the information we collect from beneficiaries and SSI recipients. In addition, SSA maintains a privacy policy for Internet services that ensures confidentiality of all information provided by the requester of a BEVE.

SSA's Internet privacy policy is:

- The public does not have to provide personal information to visit our site.
- SSA collects personally identifiable information (name, email address, SSN or other unique identifier) only when specifically and knowingly provided by the requester.
- We will only use personally identifying information provided by the requester in connection with Social Security Online or for such other purposes as we describe at the point of collection.
- SSA sometimes performs statistical analyses of user behavior to measure customer interest in the various areas of our site. Disclosure of this information to third parties is only in aggregate form.
- SSA does not give, sell, or transfer any personal information to a third party.
- SSA does not enable "cookies." (A "cookie" is a file placed on your hard drive by a Web site that allows it to monitor your use of the site, usually without your knowledge.)

- 11. Justification for Sensitive Questions** - The information collection does not involve any questions of a sensitive nature.
- 12. Estimates of Public Reporting Burden** - Approximately 870,958 respondents use the BEVE annually. The estimated response time is 5 minutes, for 72,580 burden hours.
- 13. Annual Cost to the Respondents** - There is no known cost burden to the respondents.
- 14. Annual Cost to Federal Government** - Since this is an Internet collection, there is no annual cost to the Federal Government for printing and distribution. It is not possible to determine the cost for upkeep of the Internet site or collecting the information, as these are costs associated with the upkeep of SSA's website as a whole.
- 15. Program Changes or Adjustments to the Information Collection** – The increase in the public reporting burden is a result of the public having greater access to, and are more comfortable with using, the Internet.
- 16. Plans for Publication Information Collection Results** – SSA will not publish the results of the information collection.
- 17. Displaying the OMB Approval Expiration Date** - SSA is not requesting an exception to the requirement to display the OMB approval expiration date.

- 18. Exception 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.