



June 25, 2019

The Honorable Richard Neal
Chairman
Committee on Ways & Means
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin Brady
Ranking Member
Committee on Ways & Means
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Neal and Ranking Member Brady:

The Coalition for Paper Options is an alliance of consumer and senior organizations, labor unions, rural advocates and print communications industry organizations which recognize the need to preserve access to important paper-based information and services for Americans who prefer them or depend upon them.

We write today in support of H.R. 3417, the “Beneficiary Education Tools, Telehealth, and Extenders Reauthorization Act of 2019,” and in particular, in support of Section 101 (G) of the bill that reinforces the Social Security Administration’s obligation to send printed Social Security Statements to eligible wage earners – a practice it ended in January 2017.

Social Security Statements recap each wage earner’s recorded earnings and project future retirement benefits. The statements have been described by many as the single most important financial planning tool that most Americans will ever receive, yet they were quietly eliminated in printed form for most people without any oversight from Congress.

While wage earners over age 60 still receive printed Social Security Earnings statements unless they have signed up for online access, all evidence indicates that the vast majority of Americans now simply do not receive them at all – online or otherwise. A report released in February 2019 by the Social Security Administration’s Inspector General highlights the tremendous decline in access since the statements moved to primarily online-only access. Compared to 2010 when 155 million Social Security Statements were mailed to U.S. wage earners, the report showed that just 31 million Americans received a statement in 2018 – either online or by mail.

In fact, the 14.6 million Social Security Earnings statements mailed to workers over age 60 rivals the 16.8 million Americans of any age who are accessing their statements online. Lower income citizens and those with either little access to or interest in broadband internet service were the citizens most likely to no longer receive the statement. This is, of course, the population that needs it the most.

It is time for the agency to reinstate the mailing of the annual statement. Citizens should be free to sign up for online-only access, but it should not be the automatic default. H.R. 3417 would insist on the reinstatement of the printed version of this report, and we urge the passage of the legislation by the Ways and Means Committee.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Runyan".

John Runyan
Executive Director
The Coalition for Paper Options