

or otherwise in furtherance of the purposes of the Act.

#### IV. Solicitation of Comments

Interested persons are invited to submit written data, views, and arguments concerning the foregoing, including whether the proposed rule change is consistent with the Act. Persons making written submissions should file six copies thereof with the Secretary, Securities and Exchange Commission, 450 Fifth Street, NW., Washington, DC 20549-0609. Copies of the submission, all subsequent amendments, all written statements with respect to the proposed rule change that are filed with the Commission, and all written communications relating to the proposed rule change between the Commission and any person, other than those that may be withheld from the public in accordance with the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 552, will be available for inspection and copying in the Commission's Public Reference Section, 450 Fifth Street, NW., Washington, DC 20549. Copies of such filing also will be available for inspection and copying at the principal office of NSCC. All submissions should refer to File No. SR-NSCC-2001-14 and should be submitted by November 15, 2001.

For the Commission by the Division of Market Regulation, pursuant to delegated authority.<sup>7</sup>

**Margaret H. McFarland,**

*Deputy Secretary.*

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#### SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

##### Agency Information Collection Activities: Proposed Request and Comment Request

The Social Security Administration (SSA) publishes a list of information collection packages that will require clearance by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in compliance with Pub. L. 104-13 effective October 1, 1995, The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. SSA is soliciting comments on the accuracy of the agency's burden estimate; the need for the information;

its practical utility; ways to enhance its quality, utility and clarity; and on ways to minimize burden on respondents, including the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Written comments and recommendations regarding the information collection(s) should be submitted to the OMB Desk Officer and the SSA Reports Clearance Officer and at the following addresses:

(OMB), Office of Management and Budget, Attn: Desk Officer for SSA, New Executive Office Building, Room 10230, 725 17th St., NW., Washington, DC 20503  
(SSA), Social Security Administration, DCFAM, Attn: SSA Reports Clearance Officer, 1-A-21 Operations Bldg., 6401 Security Blvd., Baltimore, MD 21235-6401

I. The information collection listed below will be submitted to OMB within 60 days from the date of this notice. Therefore, your comments should be submitted to SSA within 60 days from the date of this publication. You can obtain copies of the collection instrument by calling the SSA Reports Clearance Officer at 410-965-4145, or by writing to him at the address listed above.

**Railroad Employment Questionnaire—0960-0078.** The Social Security Administration (SSA) uses Form SSA-671 to secure sufficient information to effect the required coordination with the Railroad Retirement Board for Social Security claims processing. It is completed whenever claimants give indications of having been employed in the railroad industry. The respondents are applicants for Social Security benefits, who have had railroad employment, or dependents of railroad workers.

*Number of Respondents:* 30,000.

*Frequency of Response:* 1.

*Average Burden Per Response:* 5 minutes.

*Estimated Annual Burden:* 2,500 hours.

II. The information collection listed below has been submitted to OMB for clearance. Your comments on the information collections would be most useful if received by OMB and SSA within 30 days from the date of this publication. You can obtain a copy of

the OMB clearance package by calling the SSA Reports Clearance Officer on (410) 965-4145, or by writing to him at the address listed above.

1. Statement Regarding Students' School Attendance—0960-0113. Form SSA-2434 is used by the Social Security Administration to determine student entitlement status of the children of coal miners, children of their widows or the brothers of deceased miners eligible for Black Lung benefits. This form collects information from students about to attain age 18, for the express purpose of evaluating their continuing eligibility for program benefits under the Federal Mine Safety Act of 1977. The respondents are entitled black lung children of coal miner's or their widow, or the brother of deceased black lung coal miners.

*Number of Respondents:* 50.

*Frequency of Response:* 1.

*Average Burden Per Response:* 10 minutes.

*Estimated Annual Burden:* 8 hours.

2. The Internet Social Security Benefits Application (ISBA)—0960-0618. One of the requirements for obtaining Social Security benefits is the filing of an application so that a determination may be made on the applicant's eligibility for monthly benefits. ISBA, which is available at the Social Security Administration's (SSA) Internet site, is one method that an individual can choose to file an application for benefits. In order to make a determination on eligibility for benefits, it is necessary to elicit from the applicant information about the date and place of birth, current and recent work, receipt of non-covered pensions etc. Currently, the ISBA can only be used to apply for retirement and spouse's benefits. SSA plans to expand ISBA to encompass Disability Insurance Benefits (DIB). SSA has used information collected by ISBA to entitle individuals to retirement insurance benefits and/or spouse's benefits. The information collected by the expanded ISBA will be used to entitle individuals to DIB as well. The respondents are applicants for retirement insurance benefits, spouse's benefits and disability benefits. Below is an estimate of the public reporting burden:

Type of benefit	Number of respondents	Frequency of response	Average burden per response	Estimated annual burden
RIB .....	130,000	1	20 minutes .....	43,333 hours.
DIB .....	39,000	1	25-30 minutes .....	16,542 hours.

<sup>7</sup> 17 CFR 200.30-3(a)(12).

Type of benefit	Number of respondents	Frequency of response	Average burden per response	Estimated annual burden
Total .....	169,000	.....	.....	59,875 hours.

Dated: October 18, 2001.

**Frederick W. Brickenkamp,**

*Reports Clearance Officer.*

[FR Doc. 01-26883 Filed 10-24-01; 8:45 am]

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## **SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION**

### **Office of the Commissioner**

#### **Cost-of-Living Increase and Other Determinations for 2002**

**AGENCY:** Social Security Administration.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** The Commissioner has determined—

(1) A 2.6 percent cost-of-living increase in Social Security benefits under title II of the Social Security Act (the Act), effective for December 2001;

(2) An increase in the Federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) monthly benefit amounts under title XVI of the Act for 2002 to \$545 for an eligible individual, \$817 for an eligible individual with an eligible spouse, and \$273 for an essential person;

(3) The student earned income exclusion to be \$1,320 per month in 2002 but not more than \$5,340 in all of 2002;

(4) The dollar fee limit for services performed as a representative payee to be \$30 per month (\$57 per month in the case of a beneficiary who is disabled and has an alcoholism or drug addiction condition that leaves him or her incapable of managing benefits) in 2002;

(5) The national average wage index for 2000 to be \$32,154.82;

(6) The Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OASDI) contribution and benefit base to be \$84,900 for remuneration paid in 2002 and self-employment income earned in taxable years beginning in 2002;

(7) For beneficiaries who will not have reached their normal retirement age by the end of 2002, the monthly exempt amount under the Social Security retirement earnings test for taxable years ending in calendar year 2002 to be \$940;

(8) The dollar amounts ("bend points") used in the benefit formula for workers who become eligible for benefits in 2002 to be \$592 and \$3,567;

(9) The dollar amounts ("bend points") used in the formula for computing maximum family benefits for

workers who become eligible for benefits in 2002 to be \$756, \$1,092, and \$1,424;

(10) The amount of taxable earnings a person must have to be credited with a quarter of coverage in 2002 to be \$870;

(11) The "old-law" contribution and benefit base to be \$63,000 for 2002;

(12) The monthly amount deemed to constitute substantial gainful activity for statutorily blind individuals in 2002 to be \$1,300, and the corresponding amount for non-blind disabled persons to be \$780;

(13) The earnings threshold establishing a month as a part of a trial work period to be \$560 for 2002; and

(14) Coverage thresholds for 2002 to be \$1,300 for domestic workers and \$1,200 for election workers.

#### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Jeffrey L. Kunkel, Office of the Chief Actuary, Social Security Administration, 6401 Security Boulevard, Baltimore, MD 21235, (410) 965-3013. For information on eligibility or claiming benefits, call 1-800-772-1213. Information relating to this announcement is available on the Internet at <http://www.ssa.gov/OACT/COLA/index.html>.

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

In accordance with the Act, the Commissioner must publish within 45 days after the close of the third calendar quarter of 2001 the benefit increase percentage and the revised table of "special minimum" benefits (section 215(i)(2)(D)). Also, the Commissioner must publish on or before November 1 the national average wage index for 2000 (section 215(a)(1)(D)), the OASDI fund ratio for 2001 (section 215(i)(2)(C)(ii)), the OASDI contribution and benefit base for 2002 (section 230(a)), the amount of earnings required to be credited with a quarter of coverage in 2002 (section 213(d)(2)), the monthly exempt amounts under the Social Security retirement earnings test for 2002 (section 203(f)(8)(A)), the formula for computing a primary insurance amount for workers who first become eligible for benefits or die in 2002 (section 215(a)(1)(D)), and the formula for computing the maximum amount of benefits payable to the family of a worker who first becomes eligible for old-age benefits or dies in 2002 (section 203(a)(2)(C)).

## **Cost-of-Living Increases**

### *General*

The next cost-of-living increase, or automatic benefit increase, is 2.6 percent for benefits under titles II and XVI of the Act. Under title II, OASDI benefits will increase by 2.6 percent for individuals eligible for December 2001 benefits, payable in January 2002. This increase is based on the authority contained in section 215(i) of the Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)). Under title XVI, Federal SSI payment levels will also increase by 2.6 percent effective for payments made for the month of January 2002 but paid on December 31, 2001. This is based on the authority contained in section 1617 of the Act (42 U.S.C. 1382f).

### *Automatic Benefit Increase Computation*

Under section 215(i) of the Act, the third calendar quarter of 2001 is a cost-of-living computation quarter for all the purposes of the Act. The Commissioner is, therefore, required to increase benefits, effective for December 2001, for individuals entitled under section 227 or 228 of the Act, to increase primary insurance amounts of all other individuals entitled under title II of the Act, and to increase maximum benefits payable to a family. For December 2001, the benefit increase is the percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers from the third quarter of 2000 to the third quarter of 2001.

Section 215(i)(1) of the Act provides that the Consumer Price Index for a cost-of-living computation quarter shall be the arithmetic mean of this index for the 3 months in that quarter. We round the arithmetic mean, if necessary, to the nearest 0.1. The Department of Labor's Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers for each month in the quarter ending September 30, 2000, is: for July 2000, 169.4; for August 2000, 169.3; and for September 2000, 170.4. The arithmetic mean for this calendar quarter is 169.7. The corresponding Consumer Price Index for each month in the quarter ending September 30, 2001, is: for July 2001, 173.8; for August 2001, 173.8; and for September 2001, 174.8. The arithmetic mean for this calendar quarter is 174.1. Thus, because the Consumer Price Index for the calendar quarter ending September 30, 2001, exceeds that for the