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National Poll Shows Americans Overwhelmingly Oppose Federal Efforts to Shift Citizens to Digital-Only Information & Services

*73 Percent of Respondents Say it is Wrong to Expect Citizens to Go Online to Interact with Govt.;
85 Percent Say Federal Decisions to 'Go Paperless' Should be Overseen by Congress*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – [Consumers for Paper Options](http://www.paperoptions.org), a coalition of individuals and organizations advocating for equal access to government services and information, today announced the results of a national poll, which demonstrates that an overwhelming majority of Americans oppose the federal government's efforts to eliminate paper-based information and services.

Recent federal decisions to eradicate paper-based options for key services – such as Social Security checks, savings bonds and income tax forms – have rendered these services difficult or even impossible for millions of Americans to access while exposing them to rising fraud. In fact, Social Security fraud due to the electronic payments mandate will be the subject of a [Senate Special Committee on Aging hearing](#), which will be broadcast live today at 2 p.m.

In the survey's most significant finding, a full 73 percent of respondents said that it is extremely (50 percent) or somewhat (23 percent) wrong to require anyone, regardless of their situation, to go online in order to interact with government agencies. Meanwhile, 85 percent said that, prior to imposing policies that restrict paper-based information and services, government agencies should be required to submit to congressional oversight. Most previous decisions to "go paperless," however, have been made with little or no oversight or public comment.

Survey respondents also demonstrated a near-universal belief that government efforts to shift citizens to online-only documents and services are harmful to many Americans – 89 percent of respondents said such actions disadvantage the elderly, disabled, low income, and poorly educated. Of those respondents, 83 percent also want the government to take action to prevent any shift to electronic formats from disadvantaging such vulnerable demographic groups.

"We know that the federal government's efforts to go paperless are hurting Americans caught in the digital divide, but this survey proves that Americans of all ages and income levels are strikingly united in the belief that the government should not force people to go digital," said John Runyan, executive director of Consumers for Paper Options. "Americans also overwhelmingly recognize that these new paperless policies jeopardize seniors and other vulnerable citizens."

Runyan continued, "Online services work for many Americans, but this survey illuminates the unintended costs of the federal government's one-size-fits-all paperless initiatives. The American people clearly object to the idea that the government should decide how they receive Social Security payments or access important services like savings bonds and tax forms. It's time for Congress to act and ensure that paper-based services are preserved for citizens who want them."

The executive summary, which contains more information and survey data, is available online at http://www.paperoptions.org/links/Executive_Summary.pdf.

Consumers for Paper Options supports H. Res. 97, a bipartisan resolution introduced this year in the U.S. House of Representatives by Reps. Sean Duffy (R-Wis.) and Mike Michaud (D-Maine). The resolution seeks to reverse recent federal initiatives to completely eliminate paper-based information and services, such as Social Security checks and earnings statements, savings bonds and income tax forms.

Other survey findings from the Consumers for Paper Options survey include:

- 72 percent believe that under no circumstances should government agencies be allowed to force people to change from paper to electronic format for receiving documents that require action. 18 percent said shifts should be allowed, but only with exceptions for the poor, elderly or disabled, or for critical providers.
- 69 percent say that government agencies should not be allowed to force people to change from paper to electronic for receiving documents that do not require action. Nearly 21 percent say shifts should be allowed, but only with exceptions for the poor, elderly or disabled, or for critical providers.
- 84 percent say it is not OK for companies that send bills, statements, and informational documents such as proxies or privacy statements to force customers to receive those documents in electronic format only.

The structured survey was conducted by leading research firm InfoTrends using 3,000 U.S. residents ages 18 and over. The margin of error is +/-1.8 percent. Respondents were drawn randomly from a pool of several million consumer panelists. The sample mirrors the age, gender and income demographics of the U.S. population as reported by the Bureau of the Census.

About Consumers for Paper Options

Consumers for Paper Options is a coalition of individuals and organizations who believe paper-based communications are critically important for millions of Americans, especially seniors and the 30 percent of Americans without Internet access. While regulated entities and governments at every level need to streamline services, cut costs and improve efficiencies, preserving paper-based options for information and essential services for those who need or want them should remain a crucial priority. The goal of Consumers for Paper Options is to preserve access to information in a way that neither hinders the natural evolution of technology nor discriminates against those who may not, or cannot, use it. For more information, visit www.paperoptions.org.