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Consumers Overwhelmingly Support Paper Options, New Poll Shows
Consumers for Paper Options Calls on Congress to Review Agency Actions

WASHINGTON - Resisting the government's aggressive effort to push electronic-only distribution of information and services, a new poll shows a majority of American consumers strongly support the option of receiving critical government communications on paper. In a recent poll, 72% of consumers surveyed said they would like for the government to continue to provide paper copies of essential documents like [Social Security checks](#), [SS annual earnings statements](#) and [IRS tax forms](#). The government has either eliminated – or will soon eliminate – the paper version of each of these important documents.

The poll* also revealed that even when the elimination of paper-based documents is presented as a cost-saving measure, 72% of respondents of all political affiliations believe that the government should continue to provide important paper-based documents and records. Consumers for Paper Options (CPO) called on Congress to conduct basic oversight hearings into recent Administration decisions in this area.

“A strong majority of consumers want their important documents and records on paper,” said the CPO’s Executive Director John Runyan. “Even a majority of active internet users want the ability to choose how they receive their information. With almost [30 percent of households](#) without internet access, the government cannot simply eliminate paper-based information and expect citizens to just deal with it. Heedlessly pursuing this policy will unnecessarily complicate the lives of many citizens. It will also expose them to greater risks of cyber fraud and ID theft.”

Consumers are also critical of private sector practices in this area. Eighty-three percent of respondents agreed that private sector financial institutions should not charge for paper-based financial statements. “Financial institutions which are not attuned to public sentiment in the area risk customer backlash,” Runyan said.

[The Government Accountability Office \(GAO\)](#) recently criticized the Social Security Administration’s decision to eliminate the Statement of Annual Earnings, describing the statement as a “key financial literacy tool.” “A citizen’s ability to opt out of paper and into electronic delivery is the only way to ensure consumers can get the information they need in a format that works for them,” Runyan said.

Consumers are just beginning to realize that the government is making major shifts in the delivery of important information. This shift won’t be fully appreciated until the Social Security Administration phases out paper checks next year. Citizens are clearly concerned about these developments and the poll reveals the strength of that opposition.

Consumers for Paper Options urges Congress to review the Administration’s recent actions to eliminate important paper-based documents and records and to conduct oversight into these decisions. “When millions of Americans stop receiving paper Social Security checks next year and receive a debit card in its place, I suspect Congress will hear about it,” said Runyan. “Congress should insist on giving consumers a choice in how they receive critically important information,” he added.

*Sept 12-13, 2011 N=1000 Registered Voters, Sponsored by Consumers for Paper Options (www.paperoptions.org)