

**Contact:** Beth Dozier, 202.429.1833, [bethdozier@rational360.com](mailto:bethdozier@rational360.com)

## **Consumers for Paper Options Applauds Progress in Effort to Reinstate Mailing of Social Security Earnings Statements**

*Thanks to Congressional Action, Social Security Administration Plans to Send Earnings Statements Every Five Years, Beginning This Year*

WASHINGTON, D.C. (April 21, 2014) – [Consumers for Paper Options](http://www.paperoptions.com), a coalition advocating for access to paper-based services and information, today applauded progress in the effort to restore the mailing of Social Security Earnings Statements, which has been a key focus of the coalition’s agenda for over two years. The Social Security Administration, which in January was directed by Congress to devise a plan for reinstating this effort, will mail the Earnings Statements this September and every five years thereafter to every American ages 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55 and 60 who has not signed up for online statements.

The Social Security Administration eliminated its annual mailing of Earnings Statements in 2011, but was directed in the Fiscal Year 2014 funding bill – H.R. 3547 – to present a plan to Congress within 60 days that includes “a significant restoration of the mailing of statements” to individuals. While earnings statements are currently available online, wage-earners must first create an online account and provide sensitive personal information before being granted access. This presents a significant burden for the 25 percent of Americans without Internet access, as well as those with cybersecurity concerns, while many other citizens do not even know the online statements exist.

“Millions of Americans, including the 25 percent without Internet access, have no way to verify the accuracy of their Social Security benefits, or even plan for retirement without the mailed Social Security Earnings Statements,” said John Runyan, executive director of Consumers for Paper Options. “Reinstating this important financial planning tool, even if it’s only delivered every five years, is a step in the right direction. It is also a reminder that Congress should have oversight of all federal agency decisions to go ‘paperless’ before they take effect.”

Runyan continued, “Consumers for Paper Options consistently urged Congress to require the Social Security Administration to reinstate the effort, and we are grateful to the congressional leaders who made it happen. Because Earnings Statements are unfortunately not the only paper-based resource being eliminated by the federal government, Reps. Sean Duffy and Mike Michaud have taken the lead in introducing H. Res. 97 to bring agency decisions to go paperless under Congressional review. We urge members of Congress to support this critical effort.”

According to a [national poll](#) commissioned last year by Consumers for Paper Options, 85 percent of consumers said that, prior to imposing policies that restrict paper-based resources, government agencies should be required to submit to congressional oversight. Most previous decisions to “go paperless,” – including the decision to eliminate the mailing of Social Security Earnings Statements – have been made with little or no oversight or public comment. In addition, 72 percent of consumers



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surveyed said they would like for the government to continue to provide paper copies of essential documents like Social Security Earnings Statements and benefits checks.

Consumers for Paper Options supports other Congressional efforts to restore and protect access to paper-based government information and services – including H. Res. 97, a bipartisan resolution introduced by Reps. Sean Duffy (R-Wis.) and Mike Michaud (D-Maine) that seeks to reverse federal initiatives to eliminate paper-based information and services. Consumers for Paper Options also supports H.R. 3385, the SAVINGS Act, which was introduced by Rep. Matthew Cartwright (D-Pa.) The SAVINGS Act would protect access to savings bonds, which are no longer sold in paper form, by preserving the Tax-Time Savings Bond Program through 2018.

### **About Consumers for Paper Options**

Consumers for Paper Options is a coalition established by the Envelope Manufacturers Association to bring industry, non-profits and consumers together to address the government's transition to Internet-only information and services at the exclusion of millions of citizens who still need paper-based information and services, especially seniors and the 25 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](http://www.paperoptions.org).

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