



OFFICE *of* GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES

April 1, 2016 — Sent via U.S mail

[REDACTED]

Re: Case No.: 201600574
NG: CM: KG

NATIONAL
ARCHIVES
and RECORDS
ADMINISTRATION

8601 ADELPHI ROAD
OGIS
COLLEGE PARK, MD
20740-6001

web: www.ogis.archives.gov
e-mail: ogis@nara.gov
phone: 202-741-5770
toll-free: 1-877-684-6448
fax: 202-741-5769

Dear [REDACTED]

This responds to your request for assistance from the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS), which we received on March 2, 2016 via U.S. mail. Your request for assistance pertains to a records request to the Social Security Administration (SSA).

Congress created OGIS to complement existing FOIA practice and procedure; we strive to work in conjunction with the existing request and appeal process. The goal is for OGIS to allow, whenever practical, the requester to exhaust his or her remedies within the agency, including the appeal process. OGIS has no investigatory or enforcement power, nor can we compel an agency to release documents. OGIS serves as the Federal FOIA Ombudsman and our jurisdiction is limited to assisting with the FOIA process.

OGIS carefully reviewed your submission, and we understand that you requested an identification number that the SSA may have issued to [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] SSA denied your request on [REDACTED]. You appealed this response, explaining the importance of the records you seek. On [REDACTED] [REDACTED] the agency responded to your appeal, affirming the initial determination to withhold any responsive records under FOIA Exemption 6, 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(6), which protects personal privacy of individuals in records the government might have on that or any other individual.

In order to protect an individual's personal privacy, FOIA prohibits the government from releasing information about a third party without:

- his or her written consent; or
- proof of his/her death; or
- a showing of an overriding public interest in disclosure of the information.

In response to your submission, OGIS contacted SSA to discuss your request and the agency's response. SSA informed OGIS that it is firm in its decision and further explained without [REDACTED] consent, proof of his death, or an overriding



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public interest in disclosure, it is standard practice for SSA to issue a letter citing FOIA Exemption 6 without conducting a search for responsive records.

SSA further explained that its main mission is to provide Social Security benefits. The SSA does not serve as the official resource for verifying information about an individual such as parentage, an individual's birth date, an individual's date of death, or an individual's address. The policy is designed to protect the privacy interests of individuals, whose information happens to be maintained in SSA records.

While we sympathizes with your situation, there is little for OGIS to do beyond providing more information about the agency's actions. I understand that this is not the response and outcome you had hoped to receive. However, I hope you find the explanation provided above useful to understanding why SSA responded as it did to your FOIA request and appeal. Thank you for contacting OGIS; we will now consider this matter closed.

Sincerely,

JAMES V.M.L. HOLZER

Director

We appreciate your feedback. Please visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/OGIS> to take a brief anonymous survey on the service you received from OGIS.