



OFFICE of GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES

May 9, 2016 — Sent via email

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Re: Case No.: 201600581
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 1, 2016 via email. 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

[REDACTED]. SSA denied your request on [REDACTED] explaining that it could not release the application without proof that [REDACTED] was deceased. You responded on [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], providing a copy of [REDACTED] death certificate. You also explained that [REDACTED] changed [REDACTED] name to [REDACTED]. The agency responded to your submissions, informing you the requested information is exempt from disclosure under both the Privacy Act and the Freedom of Information Act because the agency could not determine if [REDACTED] is deceased. The agency further informed you that the Social Security Number you supplied for [REDACTED] is only linked to the name [REDACTED], and not to [REDACTED]. You requested OGIS's assistance in this matter.



In response to your submission, OGIS contacted SSA to discuss your request and the agency's response. SSA explained that, 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.

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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.

In your case, you seek information about an individual who may have changed █████ name. You provided SSA the death certificate for █████, but if █████ changed █████ name, there would not be a death certificate for the name █████. In discussing your request, OGIS asked SSA if there is any proof you could provide to show that █████ changed █████ name. SSA informed OGIS that if you supplied the court order which approved the name change from █████ to █████ the agency may process the request if the court order shed light on why the social security number as also affected. Usually when a name change is done, the social security number is not affected. However, in your situation, the social security number for █████ is not the same as that for █████ name, which is why the agency cannot disclose any information on █████ social security number.

I hope you find this information useful. At this time, there is no further assistance OGIS can offer. Thank you for contacting OGIS; we will now consider this matter closed.

Sincerely,

/s/

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.