October 15, 2008

Ms. Karen Evans
Administrator for E-Government and Information Technology
Office of Management and Budget
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Ms. Evans:

On behalf of the Social Security Administration (SSA), I am pleased to submit our E-Government Annual Report in accordance with the E-Government Act of 2002, as requested in your September 2, 2008 memorandum.

SSA continues to support the President's Management Agenda and the E-Government lines of business and initiatives by implementing and administering new and ongoing IT initiatives. These initiatives support our strategic goals and objectives, and are linked to our investments. These initiatives enable us to conduct business, share information and provide services to our citizens, businesses, and other government agencies over the internet.

In the pursuit of excellence in the area of providing E-Government service to our citizens, SSA uses many types of feedback channels to determine that the information and services SSA makes available to the public is achieving intended results. These include American Customer Satisfaction Index surveys, focus groups, employee feedback, and public comments received via the 800#, email, letters, and direct contact with the public in our Field Offices. For the June 2008 quarter the Federal American Customer Satisfaction Index Scorecard of government E-commerce/Transaction Sites shows that the Application for Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Costs (**i1020**) topped all Federal websites with a score of 88, while the Internet Social Security Benefits Application (**ISBA**) scored 87. Additionally, the SSA Business Services Online (**BSO**) placed third with a score of 84. This means that SSA took the first 3 spots in the E-Commerce category based on customer satisfaction.

Following is our response to each of the sections requested in the FY2008 E-Government Act Reporting Instructions.

Section 1 – Implementation of Electronic Government Initiatives

A. In July 2008, the Social Security Administration launched an online calculator, the Retirement Estimator. It provides immediate and personalized benefit estimates to help individuals plan for retirement. The Retirement Estimator was developed to enable pre-retirees to obtain more accurate retirement estimates before making a decision to file for Social Security benefits. A key feature of the Retirement Estimator is that it allows users to create multiple retirement scenarios based on the individual's actual Social Security record. The value of such an initiative had been identified several years earlier; however, concern for privacy and security issues were such that the Agency moved deliberately to ensure that the Estimator, when launched, would offer the public an online application that had high value and in which users had the utmost confidence.

The Retirement Estimator is expected to have a substantial impact on agency operations by (1) reducing calls and visits to SSA telephone centers and field offices and (2) increasing the number of individuals who file for retirement benefits online. Both outcomes will result in significant savings for the agency.

B. The Retirement Estimator was developed with a high degree of input from the public and key stakeholders (e.g., professional financial planners, human resources professionals, privacy experts, large employers, AARP, and others). The agency also monitors feedback received from users, the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) and other sources to evaluate the effectiveness of the Retirement Estimator and identify areas for improvement

C. SSA worked collaboratively with pubic, business, and private organizations and partners in developing this E-Government service. They include citizens, professional financial planners, human resources professionals, privacy experts, employers, AARP, the American Customer Satisfaction Institute and others.

D. In approximately three months since its initial deployment, the Retirement Estimator has been used more than 725,000 times to provide retirement estimates. One third of all Retirement Estimator users are within three years of filing their application for retirement benefits. 60 percent of Retirement Estimator users indicated in surveys that they plan to file online when the time comes. An additional 14 percent of users indicate that they would also file for benefits online if they have assurances from the agency that some form of support or help will be available to them if they have a question or problem during the online filing process.

Other indications of improved performance can be seen in the Retirement Estimator's customer satisfaction scores. Scores published by the American Customer Satisfaction Institute (ACSI) indicate that the Retirement Estimator will be a highly ranked government online application when the first quarterly report is published in late October. The scores indicate that the Estimator is delivering high value to users and that it is also shaping user behaviors with respect to how they will file when the time comes to file for retirement benefits.

E. Because the Retirement Estimator has been in place for only a short time, it is difficult to calculate current cost savings. Clearly the high usage figures suggest that front line employees are probably receiving fewer calls about retirement estimates. It also seems likely (based on ACSI survey results) that use of the Retirement Estimator is changing the public's preferences about using online services. Prior to the launch of the Retirement Estimator, a similar survey question was asked of visitors to the Agency's online Retirement Planner. Of these users, 37 percent said they planned to file online, and another 14 percent said they would if online help were available, totaling 51 percent. The equivalent numbers for the Retirement Estimator are 60 percent and 14 percent, totaling 74 percent. The fact that almost 50% more Retirement Estimator users say they will file online using Retirement Planner (an earlier retirement planning tool available on the Agency's website), suggests that the Retirement Estimator will play an important role in channeling users into the online application when it comes time for them to file for benefits.

F. The agency committed to a significant amount of public insight early in the design process. The project team was able to design an online application that provided high value with the least cost (e.g., the project team identified an existing internal system used by employees that could provide the full range of estimating functionality and it was extremely accurate). With respect to the disabled community, the Retirement Estimator was also designed and tested for compliance with Section 508 guidelines. For those who do not have access to the Internet, the agency has worked with social organizations, financial planners, human resources professionals, libraries, and others concerning a user's ability to access the Retirement Estimator at locations other than at home (e.g., community center, library, place of employment).

G. The agency's senior IT investment decision making body, The IT Advisory Board (ITAB), reviewed and approved the Retirement Estimator as part of the Core Services Portfolio. This process is an essential component of the SSA CPIC process and requires the development of a cost-benefit analysis or business value score. Prior to ITAB review and approval, the Portfolio Manager (Associate Commissioner-level) and Portfolio Executive (Deputy Commissioner-level) assessed the alignment of the investment with the goals and vision of the portfolio, which, in turn, is aligned with the agency's goals and objectives. The Retirement Estimator was reviewed and approved by the senior SSA executives in a manner consistent with the agency's IT investment management processes.

H. The Retirement Estimator is monitored on an ongoing basis (i.e., by an assessment of usage, customer satisfaction scores, customer comments, and email comments regarding users' current and future behaviors experiences with the Estimator). This monitoring enables the agency to identify the improvements that have the highest value and that can be delivered in the most cost efficient manner.

Section 2 – Agency Information Management Activities

Following are the Social Security Administration links to the requested information

A. Chapter 4 of the SSA Information Resources Management Strategic Plan covers the SSA Enterprise Architecture and can be accessed at http://www.ssa.gov/irm/ .

B. SSA has provided and continues to provide and disseminate information using multiple channels. These include the Internet, Press Releases, Paper Publications, Mailings, Briefings, and Face-to-Face Meetings. The processes and channels used to disseminate this information are carried out in accordance with our communication's tactical plans managed by our Office of Communications. The following lists Internet links that are available to the public.

The primary link is http://www.socialsecurity.gov/. This focuses on providing access to general Agency Program and Benefit information and services along with other non-Agency related links. It also contains a link to the website's Policies & Other Important Information page at http://www.socialsecurity.gov/websitepolicies.htm. This page describes the policies and linking guidelines and includes links to the Web Content Inventory page

The Web Content Inventory page, http://www.socialsecurity.gov/webcontent/, describes the priorities and publishing schedules for all information on the web site.

Also the http://www.socialsecurity.gov/ links to an online Forms and Publications page, http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pgm/formspubs.htm, a Press Release page http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pressoffice/pressrel.htm, and the Office of the Actuary page http://www.socialsecurity.gov/OACT/. The Forms and Publication page provides the public with online access to Agency services and online forms. The Press Release page includes links to useful Press Releases and a Facts and Figures page. The Office of the Actuary page provides the public access to Actuarial Publications, Solvency Estimates, Cost of Living Adjustments, Benefits Calculator, and Beneficiary and Trustee information.

C. The following link is to the SSA primary FOIA website http://www.ssa.gov/foia/index.htm. It provides access to Agency FOIA Reading Room, including the FOIA Regulations, FOIA Guide, Annual Reports, Frequently Requested Documents, Manuals and Instructions, and Privacy Impact Assessments. This page describes the policies and linking guidelines and includes links to the Web Content Inventory page and the Freedom of Information Act (**FOIA**) page.

D. The http://mwww.ba.ssa.gov/policy/ page presents federally funded research and development information about Social Security issues.

E. SSA has cooperative agreements with the Retirement Research Consortium (RRC). The RRC is composed of world renowned retirement research centers. SSA has these agreements and provides funds to the RRC to promote retirement research and to inform the public and policymakers about Social Security issues. Information developed by the centers can be found on their individual websites. The http://mwww.ba.ssa.gov/policy/ page contains information concerning the RRC and provides links to each center.

F. SSA schedules the majority of our records under an agency specific schedule or under a General Records Schedule (**GRS**). http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/ardor/).

SSA maintains a file plan and classification scheme describing the record type, the component having ownership, and the approved disposition. The Agency specific file plan for is for interagency use only and is not available to the public.

In FY 2008, SSA submitted 3 records schedules to NARA. We are working collaboratively with NARA in the development of a "big bucket" strategy to incorporate most of the SSA records into one of 10 "big buckets". Although we do not have an actual count of unscheduled systems at this time, we identified over 700 applications and systems currently in use. We are now in the process of evaluating each of them to determine any unscheduled systems.

In addition to maintaining an adequate budget, E-Authentication, IT Security, Infrastructure, and the continuing challenges in addressing the specific needs of the Social Security beneficiaries for on line services, are issues that have an affect our ability to successfully provide E-Government services. Except for dealing directly with the beneficiaries needs the other issues are being addressed in the E-Government lines of business and individual initiatives. We participate in 17 initiatives and actively work in five of the lines of business. Our E-Services efforts are directed at developing Agency specific electronic services and addressing the needs and requirements for dealing directly with our beneficiaries electronically.

Should you have any questions regarding this report, please contact me or have your staff contact Joe Hasuly by telephone at 410-966-1647 or e-mail at joe.hasuly@ssa.gov.

Sincerely

Thomas P. Hughes
Chief information Officer