

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 20, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20150

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-204, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

As Congress considers additional aid packages for COVID-19 relief, we respectively request that you include legislation to curb improper payments. The “Stopping Improper Payments to Deceased People Act” is an important bipartisan piece of legislation that would provide federal agencies with the tools they need to curb waste and fraud involving federal payments.

On June 25, 2020, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported that the federal government sent almost 1.1 million economic impact payments totaling nearly \$1.4 billion to deceased persons as part of its responsibilities under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act.<sup>[1]</sup> Unfortunately the government sending payments to the deceased and errors in Social Security death data are not new problems. In 2011 the Inspector General for the Office of Personnel Management identified more than \$601 million payments to federal retirees later found to have already died.<sup>[2]</sup> And a 2015 Social Security Administration (SSA) Office of Inspector General report found that SSA erroneously listed 6.5 million individuals as alive who were older than 112 years old, despite there only being one known living person of that age in the United States at that time.<sup>[3]</sup>

---

<sup>[1]</sup> Government Accountability Office, *Opportunities to Improve Federal Response and Recovery Efforts*, GAO-20-625 (Washington, D.C.: June 25, 2020)

<sup>[2]</sup> S. Rept. 116-49, *Stopping Improper Payments to Deceased People Act*, Report of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee.

<sup>[3]</sup> Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General, A-06-14-34030.

In response, a group of bipartisan lawmakers introduced legislation beginning in 2013<sup>[4]</sup>, and introduced in each successive Congress, to curb improper payments to deceased individuals. On June 30, 2020 the Senate passed the Stopping Improper Payments to Deceased People Act, an important piece of legislation that takes several steps to address this problem. This legislation has key provisions including allowing federal agencies access to the complete death database at SSA, requiring agencies to use death data to curb improper payments, and requiring SSA to take steps to improve death data.

As elected officials one of our most important responsibilities is to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars. The Stopping Improper Payments to Deceased People Act is a common sense bipartisan measure that would help save billions of federal taxpayer dollars by curbing erroneous government payments to people who are deceased. We urge the Congress to take action to address this issue once and for all.

Sincerely,

Thomas R. Carper

John Kennedy

---

Thomas R. Carper  
United States Senator

---

John Kennedy  
United States Senator

Rand Paul

Gary C. Peters

---

Rand Paul, M.D.  
United States Senator

---

Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator

---

<sup>[4]</sup> S. Rept. 113-124, *Improper Payments Agency Cooperation Enhancement Act of 2013*, Report of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee.