

By Michigan - Pam Liebegott, Ann Arbor Chapter 0304 Newsletter Editor

The Newsletter Editor's Experience Applying for Social Security Benefits

Pam wrote the original article as part of her Ann Arbor Chapter 0304 Newsletter. The following is the next phase she has done in her experience with obtaining the funds she should be entitled to due to the implementation of the Social Security Fairness Act Bill. Pam posted the following in the FEDHub Michigan Community and has given permission to further post in microsites. Jan 25, 2025, 11:40 PM.

I received a letter from the Social Security Administration for proof of my identity on Wednesday, Jan 22, 2025. Fortunately, there was enough time to visit the Ann Arbor office that day. This was my first visit. Plenty of parking and seating in the office. The SSA person I met with was quick, efficient, and very informative. She accepted my state issued driver's license as ID. I would have been able to submit my marriage license, although not requested yet, but it was a copy. The SSA needs an original. It took about 90 minutes from the time I entered the SSA office until departure.

Note: SSA, at least the Ann Arbor office, did not have any brochures about the Social Security Fairness Act at this time.

Originals of the marriage license were ordered on Wednesday evening with speedy shipping (If you need to order originals of your documentation, search the county and state where the event occurred and the type of event). UPS delivered the envelop Friday afternoon. Enough time to turn the paperwork in that day, or so I thought.

Friday afternoon at about 2:30 is not the optimum time to visit the Ann Arbor Social Security Office. I got one of the last parking spots and went into the office building expecting that at least I could make an appointment on the self-service kiosk to turn in a document next week. No such luck. I took a number. Forty minutes later, maybe 5 people were called in that amount of time. It was about 3:15 or 3:20. Someone looking like a supervisor informed the crowd that unfortunately there was insufficient time to get to everyone today. She recommended people go home and call to make an appointment. I took her advice.

The security guard was kind enough to hand me a paper with the phone number for the appointments.

So, I called when I got home. A pre-recorded message announced that they were experiencing a high volume of requests-the wait for an agent would be over 120 minutes. A very nice message talked about the Social Security Fairness Act:

SSA expects to process 3 million Social Security Fairness Act transactions. SSA estimates that it will take a year or more to complete this work.

If someone impacted by GPO/WEP is already receiving Social Security, that person does not need to do anything. Social Security will process their recalculation automatically.

SSA recommended people do as much as possible on the SSA website.

SSA was accurate that the amount of time needed to respond to my call would be longer than 120 minutes. I will say that the telephone connection was stable. We did not lose the connection. About 170 minutes after the call, someone did answer.

The individual on the call used a computer to communicate. This was a new experience for me. The speech was very understandable, and responses were fast. I took the next available appointment, March 3, 2025.

While it was a frustrating day, all of the Social Security people were very kind. From what I observed, people were treated with courtesy and moved along at a steady pace.

While as a customer, I would like the process to move faster, as a former federal employee, if it takes 15 minutes on average to process a work unit, then 4 units are the most that can be expected to be completed in an hour. No amount of cajoling or incentivizing will increase processing speeds without eliminating steps or automating the analysis.

So, SSA, as a retired federal employee to you, it is a big year ahead for you. Good luck!

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