

A History of the Social Security Administration

**During the Clinton
Administration
1993-2001**



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The Clinton Administration History Project
Washington, DC
2000



SOCIAL SECURITY

COMMISSIONER'S STATEMENT

On behalf of the Social Security Administration, I am extremely pleased to be able to submit this document as part of the Clinton Administration History Project.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the first Presidential library near his home in Hyde Park, New York, as a way for future generations to learn from and build on the past. I am proud that at Social Security we are able to help continue this tradition by contributing a narrative and artifacts related to the Clinton Administration and its accomplishments and influence on our Agency over the past eight years.

As President, Bill Clinton continued to not only highlight the importance of the Social Security program to all Americans, but he reminded people that it is an essential part of American life.

In the narrative of events and activities my staff put together, the following issues are discussed: our evolution into an independent agency, the long-term challenges of the Social Security program, along with program changes, customer service, program integrity, public education, and work-force investments.

The common thread throughout all this material, as President Clinton has emphasized, is the significance of the Social Security program to the American people yesterday, today and tomorrow. It is our hope that in the future, as various individuals study Social Security, this narrative will be helpful in explaining what these eight years have meant for the Social Security Administration and the people it serves.

Kenneth S. Apfel
Commissioner of Social Security

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PREFACE

Upon dedicating the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and Museum, the nation's first Presidential Library, on June 30th, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the visionary who guided the creation of the Social Security Administration had this to say:

The dedication of a library is in itself an act of faith.

To bring together the records of the past and to house them in buildings where they will be preserved for the use of men living in the future, a nation must believe in three things.

It must believe in the past.

It must believe in the future.

It must, above all, believe in the capacity of

Its people so to learn from the past that they

Can gain in judgement the creation of

The future.

We at the Social Security Administration, in the great tradition of Franklin Roosevelt, hope that through our narrative history, we will contribute to the value of Presidential libraries, and in this particular case, that of President William Jefferson Clinton, 42nd President of the United States. In this way, we are affirming our belief in the past and in the future, and in the American people's ability to learn from the past to create a better future.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION



It is fitting that in the final year of the Clinton Administration, Social Security celebrated its 65th anniversary. Sixty-five years ago, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act into law, insuring in his words, “*The security of home, the security of livelihood and the security of social insurance.*” He was a true visionary and his actions in creating Social Security – along with creation of the rest of the New Deal, helped move this country out of the Great Depression.

And President William J. Clinton has not only assured the viability of this great program, but has built on the solid foundation that FDR laid. It’s also ironic that this program, which is an integral part of the very fabric of our nation, thrives today in a time of economic prosperity, proving that Social Security is a timeless program, serving the American people well in all types of economic environments. The Social Security program has become the most successful, most popular domestic program in the nation’s history.

This Administrative History is a testament to that legacy by providing a comprehensive picture of SSA’s efforts during the Clinton Administration in administering the Social Security programs. What follows highlights the major issues, significant events, and organizational changes at the Social Security Administration (SSA) during the past eight years. Because of their significance, information about the establishment of SSA as an Independent Agency and the long-term solvency of the Social Security program are presented as separate chapters.

During the eight years, SSA made great strides in addressing the priorities established by its Commissioners: educating the public about the value of the Social Security program and its long-term challenges, as well as its role in personal, financial planning; assuring program integrity; providing responsive service to the public; improving the administration of its Disability and Supplemental Security Income programs; strengthening its long-range planning and policy making processes; and investing in its employees.

This Administrative History will hopefully be of interest to historians, biographers and scholars from many disciplines. It provides a narrative compiled from the viewpoint of people who were actively involved in administering the Agency's policy initiatives. In addition, a detailed chronology of major SSA events that occurred between 1993 and 2000 is included as Exhibit 1.

PROGRAM IMPACT

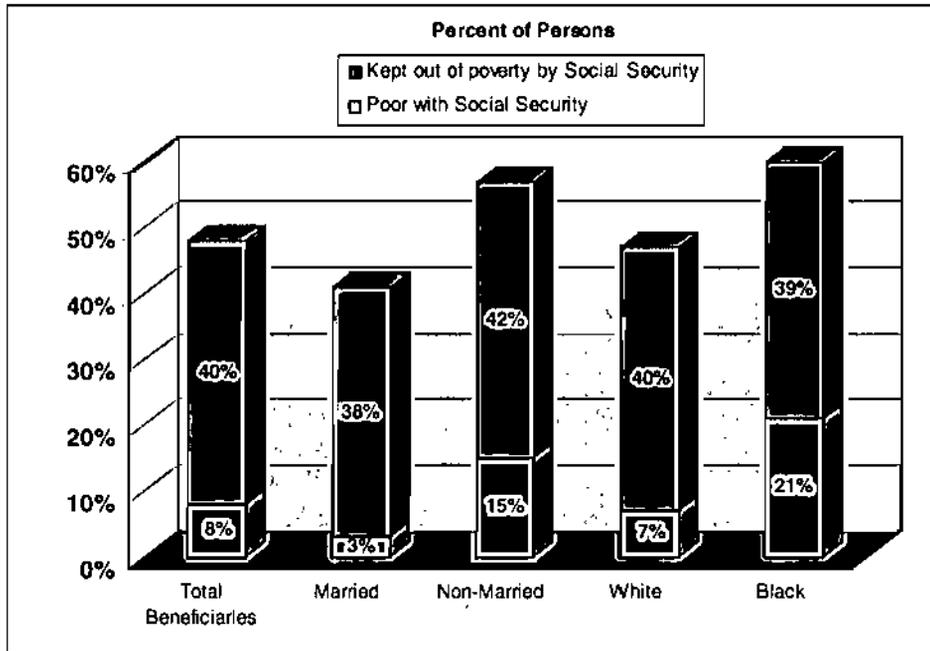
SSA administers one of the largest and most complex Federal Government programs. The Agency provides social insurance coverage to more than 153 million workers, the self-employed and their families. The Old Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI) and the Disability Insurance (DI) programs (commonly known as Social Security) are based in Title II of the Social Security Act. More than 48 million persons received monthly Social Security benefits, totaling in excess of \$33 billion in June 2000.¹ Of these, more than 31.5 million were retired persons and their family members, but Social Security is also much more than just a retirement program. More than seven million family members of deceased workers and approximately 6.6 million disabled workers and their dependents received monthly Social Security benefits. The Social Security program is, in fact, an intergenerational compact that has become America's family protection plan.

Because of these programs, people in this country are doing much better economically. For example, since 1959, the poverty rate among elderly Social Security beneficiaries has declined by 72 percent, from 35.2 percent in 1959 to 9.7 percent in 1999, largely due to Social Security benefits.²

¹ OASDI Fact Sheet, Office of the Chief Actuary, June 30, 2000.

² March 2000 Income Supplement, Current Population Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

SOCIAL SECURITY'S ROLE IN REDUCING POVERTY FOR PERSONS AGED 65 AND OLDER – 1999³



SSA is also responsible for the management of the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. SSI, based in Title XVI of the Social Security Act, is a means-tested program that pays monthly checks to people who have limited assets and income, and who are 65 or older, blind, or disabled. Under Title XVI, about 6.6 million people received monthly SSI payments totaling \$2.7 billion in October 2000.⁴

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

The original Social Security Act established a Social Security Board (Board) as an independent agency, comprised of three members appointed by the President.⁵ The Chief Executive was the Chairman of the Board, who reported directly to the President. The Board was abolished in 1946 and replaced by the Social Security Administration. Since 1946, a single Commissioner has headed SSA. Thirteen persons held the position of Commissioner between 1946 and 2000.

³ March 2000 Income Supplement, Current Population Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

⁴ SSI Monthly Update, Office of Research, Evaluation and Statistics, October, 2000.

⁵ Social Security Act of 1935, Title VII.

As the Chief Executive Officer, the Commissioner represents SSA, both internally and externally, as its leader. In this role, the Commissioner must be able to communicate effectively to the Congress and to the public. The Commissioner must lead with high energy and boundless enthusiasm, give employees a sense of purpose and direction, and plan for success.

Commissioner Shirley Chater served as Commissioner during most of President Clinton's first term. Commissioner Apfel led the Agency as its first confirmed Commissioner as an Independent Agency and served as Commissioner of Social Security during most of the President's second term.⁶

**SHIRLEY S. CHATER, COMMISSIONER OF SOCIAL SECURITY:
10/08/93 TO 02/28/97**

President Clinton nominated Shirley Sears Chater on August 3, 1993. She was confirmed by the Senate on October 7, 1993 and became Commissioner of Social Security on October 8. She served 41 months as Commissioner, longer than any Commissioner did in the previous 19 years. Overall, she was the fifth longest-serving Commissioner in SSA's history. During her tenure, Commissioner Chater concentrated on initiatives in five broad areas. They were (1) customer service, (2) disability redesign, (3) short-term improvements in the hearing process, (4) automation, and (5) union/management partnership.⁷



**Commissioner Shirley Chater
with Vice President Gore**

⁶ See the Independent Agency chapter for information about SSA's Acting Commissioners and top leadership, including political appointees, during the Clinton Administration.

⁷ See the Independent Agency chapter for specific information about major accomplishments during Commissioners Chater and Apfel's tenure.

**KENNETH S. APFEL, COMMISSIONER OF SOCIAL SECURITY:
09/29/97 TO PRESENT**

Kenneth S. Apfel was nominated on May 23, 1997 by President Clinton and confirmed by the Senate on September 19, 1997 as the Commissioner of Social Security. His formal swearing-in ceremony was held at SSA Headquarters in Baltimore on September 29, 1997. He was the first confirmed Commissioner of Social Security since SSA became an Independent Agency on March 31, 1995. During his tenure, Commissioner Apfel was personally involved in numerous major initiatives including (1) educating the public about the value of the Social Security program and its long-term challenges, (2) developing SSA's 2010 Vision, (3) strengthening the management of the SSI program, (4) childhood disability changes, and (5) return-to-work efforts for people with disabilities.



**Commissioner Kenneth Apfel
with President Clinton**

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

The Agency's new mission statement, formulated in 1997, reflected SSA's traditional role in American life and its expanded role as an independent agency. SSA had always taken pride in paying "the right check to the right person at the right time" and in treating each customer with care and compassion. The new mission signaled that these ideas were still important. It was clearly directed toward producing an outcome ("To promote the economic security of the nation's people..."). This supported the Government Performance and Results Act's mandate for a Government focused on producing outcomes rather than outputs.

SSA's Mission

"To promote the economic security of the nation's people through compassionate and vigilant leadership in shaping and managing America's Social Security programs."

SSA's stewardship of the Social Security trust funds and general revenues has always been an important part of the Agency's mission. The new mission elevated this traditional stewardship to one of "vigilant leadership in...managing" funds entrusted to the Agency. As an Independent Agency, SSA's mission included, for the first time, leadership in the shaping of America's Social Security programs through active policy development, research, and program evaluation.

In January 1994, under Commissioner Shirley S. Chater's leadership, SSA revised the three Agency-level strategic goals established in 1991⁸ as follows:

- Rebuild Public Confidence in Social Security;
- Provide World-Class Service; and,
- Create a Nurturing Environment for SSA Employees.

In 1997, the Agency's 1997-2002 Strategic Plan⁹ created five goals. These goals elaborated on the 1994 goals and reflected SSA as an Independent Agency. They encompassed all of the Agency's program activities, addressed the universe of competing needs of the wide variety of SSA stakeholders, and gave meaning to the work of every Social Security and Disability Determination Service (DDS) employee. The five strategic goals are listed below.

The first goal summarizes the Agency's strategy to ensure that its programs provide a base of economic security for workers, the aged, and disabled, now and in the future. Critical analysis, research, and evaluation are integral to SSA's role in shaping the programs so that they evolve to take account of future demographic and economic trends. Decisionmakers need information on program challenges and the impact of options for strengthening the programs to meet the current and future needs of beneficiaries and workers.

1. To promote valued, strong, and responsive Social Security programs and conduct effective policy development, research, and program evaluation.

This strategic goal uses a mix of program outcomes and performance goals that measure the extent to which critical information is available for use by decisionmakers. The mix of goals reflects the fact that the effects of policy development, research, and program evaluation are difficult to quantify and measure, since many factors affect program outcomes related to a change in policy.

The second goal has guided the actions of SSA and DDS employees throughout SSA's history. It demonstrates how the Agency places its customers and their needs first.

2. To deliver customer-responsive, world-class service.

SSA has a longstanding reputation as the premier Government agency for providing customer service. As it looks to the future, SSA aims to provide the best services that organization – public or private – could provide.

⁸ The three 1991 goals were: (1) To serve the public with compassion, courtesy, consideration, efficiency and accuracy, (2) To protect and maintain the American people's investment in the Social Security Trust Funds and to instill public confidence in Social Security programs, and (3) To create an environment that ensures a highly skilled, motivated workforce dedicated to meeting the challenge of SSA's public service mission.

⁹ Social Security: "Keeping the Promise." Strategic Plan 1997-2002, September 1997.

The third goal emphasizes that SSA has a responsibility to pay benefits accurately and be a good steward of the money entrusted to its care. SSA set very high standards because it believes that the public deserves the highest possible level of performance consistent with fiscal responsibility.

3. To make SSA program management the best in business, with zero tolerance for fraud and abuse.

SSA will deter fraud and make sure that those involved are accountable, whether the public or its employees commit it.

SSA's greatest strength lies in the attitudes, skills, and drive of its employees. The fourth goal recognizes that the employees of SSA and the DDSs are key to achieving its goals and objectives. It also reflects SSA's conviction that employees deserve a professional environment in which their dedication to the SSA mission and to their own goals can flourish.

4. To be an employer that values and invests in each employee.

The focus of this goal is to ensure that SSA continues to hire and retain the highly skilled, highly performing, and highly motivated workforce that are critical to achievement of its mission. While SSA's workforce is one of its most valuable assets, technology is also important because it is essential to the effectiveness of that workforce and indispensable to the success of serving the public. The Intelligent Workstation/Local Area Network (IWS/LAN) is the linchpin for both SSA's customer service program and its entire business approach.¹⁰

One of SSA's basic responsibilities to the public is to ensure that people understand the benefits available under the Social Security programs. The fifth goal ensures that people can make informed choices as they plan for their future.

5. To strengthen public understanding of the Social Security programs.

SSA publishes more than 100 pamphlets, newsletters, booklets, and other information about its programs, policies, and procedures so that the public can be fully informed about its programs. SSA also produces information in audio, video, and electronic media. In addition, SSA produces about 20 administrative publications. Most of these publications are also available to the public on SSA's website (www.ssa.gov). In addition, SSA began mailing Social Security Statements (Statements) to all workers 25 years of age or older starting in October 1999. The Statements assist all Americans in their personal financial planning.

These five strategic goals form the framing structure for five chapters of SSA's Administrative History. The chapters capture and highlight the major issues, significant events, and organizational changes at SSA during the Clinton Administration.

¹⁰ IWS/LAN will be installed in all 1,600 facilities by March 2001.

SSA FACES SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES

The eight years of the Clinton Administration were eventful ones for Social Security. SSA faced significant programmatic challenges in the 1990s. The major ones included the long-range solvency of the Social Security trust funds, the disability claims process, growing disability caseloads and related return-to-work efforts, and the management of the SSI program. Sixteen pieces of significant legislation impacting on Social Security were enacted, including the Independent Agency legislation signed by President Clinton in August 1994. The Agency's *2010 Vision* was released outlining SSA's efforts to plan for the future. Social Security reform was the subject of the first-ever White House Conference on Social Security in December 1998, and was the centerpiece of public debate during the 2000 Presidential campaign. The disability programs drew widespread attention as the Agency worked to improve its services to disabled applicants, and Congress wrestled with disability policy issues involving payments to noncitizens and children that were contained in the welfare reform bill which became law in 1996. Reports on fraud and abuse in the media and from the General Accounting Office (GAO) and SSA's Inspector General raised questions about the management of the SSI program. GAO placed the SSI program on its "High Risk" list in February 1997 on the basis that the program was susceptible to fraud and abuse. Sending personal statements (called Social Security Statements) verifying individuals' earnings history and estimates of benefits to all workers, 25 and older, began in 1999. They served to educate the public about the benefits available to them under the Social Security programs. These statements, more than 133 million in the first year, are considered the largest customized mailings by a Federal agency. Throughout the eight-year period, SSA received high marks from many sources, both public and private, and was recognized as a highly capable and well-run agency.

SSA ENTERS THE 21ST CENTURY

2010 VISION

SSA is preparing now for the baby boom generation and the expected growth in disability and retirement workloads, newly evolving technologies and public expectations about quality service. To plan for the future effectively, Commissioner Apfel created a *2010 Vision* initiative for the Agency. The *2010 Vision*, formally released by Commissioner Apfel on September 7, 2000, was developed with input from a wide variety of stakeholders.

The mission of SSA—to promote the economic security of the nation's people—can only be accomplished through fulfillment of its fundamental responsibilities to administer effective programs, provide quality service, ensure program integrity, educate the public, and value and invest in its workforce. Each critical responsibility poses challenges to the Agency, but it was the

service challenge, resulting primarily from the factors noted below, that became the focus of the *2010 Vision*.

- By 2010, workloads will swell to unprecedented volumes. The most significant factor contributing to this change will be the aging of the baby boom generation (those born in 1946 through 1964).
- Along with the workload increase, the incredible pace of technological change will have a profound impact on both customer expectations and SSA's ability to meet those expectations.
- More than one-half of the current Federal workforce may be gone by 2010, over 28,000 SSA employees will be eligible to retire, and another 10,000 are expected to leave the Agency for other reasons. This retirement wave will result in a significant loss of institutional knowledge. The DDSs will also experience a retirement wave.

SSA's *2010 Vision* presented a picture of a changed Agency: one that, along with its DDS partners, has an integrated service delivery network using redesigned and streamlined processes supported by state-of-the-art technology. It presented an Agency that provides service comparable to or better than the private sector; an Agency that is considered an "employer of choice"—retaining, attracting, and developing a highly skilled and highly graded workforce providing world-class service.

The process of creating the *Vision* has been completed. The far more difficult process of pursuing the *Vision* is just beginning. In addition to obtaining the human resources and capital investments needed to achieve the *Vision*, SSA will link and sequence the Agency's strategic planning and budget processes to the *Vision* to ensure that resources and priorities are properly aligned. Early initiatives will be announced in the areas of technology, training, upgrading of skills and positions, and activities that will move it toward greater operational flexibility. SSA will engage in more detailed service delivery planning. The Agency will map out more specifically its business requirements—how its core business processes must change and organizational functions must adapt to realize the *Vision*. From the business requirements, SSA will outline how the Agency's human and information technology resources must evolve to support new ways of delivering service. SSA's five-year human resource plan will build upon the new business requirements and specify the target positions and skills that will be needed, and the action plans and timelines for delivering these resources. Likewise, its information technology plans will build upon these same requirements to specify systems infrastructure goals and the action plans and timelines for achieving them.

POLICY DEBATE

PROGRAM SOLVENCY

SSA is looking to the future and the preservation of the Social Security Program. Americans are living longer, healthier lives. In addition, the baby-boom generation is nearing retirement. These demographic changes create long-term funding issues for Social Security.

- **Spending exceeds tax revenues in 2015**
- **Combined OASDI trust funds peak in 2024**
- **Combined OASDI funds become exhausted in 2037**

Currently, tax revenues to the Social Security system exceed benefit payments, and the system is building large reserves that are held in the trust funds. Under the March 2000 Board of Trustees Report, benefit payments will begin to exceed tax collections in 2015.¹¹ Total income (including interest earnings on the trust funds) will exceed expenditures through 2024. It is estimated that beginning in 2025, trust fund assets would have to be redeemed to cover the difference until the assets of the combined funds are exhausted in 2037. At that time, revenues will support only about 72 percent of benefits due.

In both his 1999 and 2000 State of the Union addresses, the President proposed plans to deal with the long-term financing issues facing Social Security. His 2000 plan would extend solvency from 2037 to 2057. Other plans to ensure long-term program financing also have been proposed. The Solvency chapter discusses the efforts to resolve the long-range financing issue.

IMPROVEMENTS TO THE DISABILITY CLAIMS PROCESS

SSA strives to deliver the highest levels of service by making fair, consistent and timely decisions at all adjudicative levels. However, applicants for disability benefits sometimes find the process complex, fragmented, confusing, impersonal, and time consuming. Some also perceive the process as one in which different decisions are reached on similar cases at different levels of the administrative review process, thus requiring applicants to maneuver through multiple appeals steps.

SSA's current disability claims process consists of an initial determination by a Federally funded, but State-administered, DDS and up to three levels of administrative appeals if an individual is dissatisfied with the decision: (1) reconsideration, (2) hearing before a Federal

¹¹ See the Independent Agency chapter for information about the Board of Trustees.

administrative judge, and (3) an Appeals Council review. If the Appeals Council affirms the denial, the applicant can begin a civil action in a U.S. Federal district court.

To remedy the concerns and perceptions about the determination process, SSA implemented a plan beginning in 1993. The plan sought to improve the disability claims process from initial contact through final administrative appeal in order to improve service delivery to the millions of individuals filing for or appealing disability claims every year. Two major areas of focus have been process unification and modifications to the disability claims process.

The goal of process unification, begun in 1993, was to foster similar results on similar cases at all stages of the process through consistent application of laws, regulations, and rulings. The initiatives have shown promise. Over the last several years, there has been a decline in the allowance rates at the hearing level and an increase in the initial allowance rates at the DDS level. This trend is consistent with SSA's objectives to make the correct decision as early in the process as possible.

SSA tested various process improvements to determine what changes would help provide better customer service. Several different modifications were piloted both singularly and in combination. Data from the most significant testing model, the full process model, showed that increasing examiner authority and responsibility, using medical examiner expertise better, and increasing interaction with claimants at the initial level resulted in better quality and customer service. The full process model testing began in 1997 in eight states. The Program Changes chapter contains detailed information about SSA's efforts to improve the disability process.

TICKET TO WORK AND WORK INCENTIVES IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1999

The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 was enacted on December 17, 1999, with many of its important provisions effective January 1, 2001. The first provision of the law took effect in October 2000 and enabled many disability beneficiaries to be eligible for expanded Medicare coverage. This was a great improvement for disability beneficiaries who otherwise would have had to decide between working or keeping the health coverage they needed.

In 2001, SSA will begin a three-year national rollout of the "Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency" program. Implemented in a few States at a time, the program will give beneficiaries greater access to rehabilitation and employment services. Also, it will be easier for former beneficiaries who are working to receive benefits if they can no longer work because of their disabilities.

The new law focuses on many of the barriers that have long kept people with disabilities out of the workforce. SSA expects to make great progress in the area of work incentives, so that those individuals with disabilities who want to work can do so.

MANAGEMENT OF THE SSI PROGRAM

The SSI program provides benefits to approximately 6.6 million financially needy recipients who are aged, blind or disabled. Like other means-tested programs that respond to changing circumstances of individuals' lives, the SSI program presents challenges to ensure that it is administered efficiently, accurately, and fairly.

Over the years, legislation and court decisions have made the SSI program even more complex. As complexity has increased, so has the proportion of SSA staff resources devoted to program administration. Although the number of SSI recipients is less than 15 percent of the number of OASDI beneficiaries, SSA devoted 37 percent of its administrative budget to SSI in Fiscal Year 2000. The relatively high level of administrative costs is generally attributable to the frequent interaction required between field office staff and many SSI recipients.

SSA continues to face challenges in administering the complex provisions of the SSI program.¹² In an effort to deal with these challenges, Commissioner Apfel undertook a major initiative in 1998 to strengthen management of the SSI program. In October 1998, SSA issued the first management report on the SSI program, detailing the Agency's aggressive plans: (1) improve payment accuracy, (2) increase continuing disability reviews (CDRs), (3) combat fraud, and (4) collect overpayments.¹³ This multifaceted approach to improving SSA's administration of the SSI program remains one of the agency's highest priorities. SSA executed several of the initiatives outlined in the report, such as new computer matches and processing more eligibility redeterminations.

RETIREMENT EARNINGS TEST (RET)

Another significant change in Social Security during the Clinton Administration was the repeal of the Retirement Earnings Test (RET) which helped retirees to supplement their Social Security benefits with earnings. On April 7, 2000, President Clinton signed The Senior Citizens' Freedom to Work Act of 2000 eliminating the retirement earnings test for beneficiaries aged 65-69, upon reaching their Normal Retirement Age.

Prior to the change, earnings above a certain limit would affect benefits. Although benefits withheld under the retirement earnings test were roughly offset by higher benefits later on, many people perceived the retirement earnings test as a tax on their earnings. Eliminating

¹² For example, in February 1997, GAO designated the SSI program as a high-risk area, citing concerns in three programmatic areas: (1) financial eligibility, (2) continuing disability eligibility, and (3) return-to-work. Another GAO "high-risk" report issued in January 1999 on the SSI program cited the same areas.

¹³ *Management of the Supplemental Security Income Program: Today and in the Future*, October, 1999.

this perceived disincentive was expected to lead to a modest increase in work activity among some retirees.

As a result of this legislation, about 800,000 beneficiaries age 65-69 and 150,000 auxiliary beneficiaries, who previously had lost some or all of their benefits under the test, now receive full benefits. About 400,000 beneficiaries in this group were reinstated and received retroactive payments averaging \$3,500 per person. SSA paid a total of \$1.5 billion in refunds just three weeks after the legislation was signed into law.

MAJOR LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

The following chapters discuss, in detail, the impact of the legislative changes. The annual highlights of Social Security legislation enacted during the Clinton Administration included the following:

1993 AMENDMENTS

Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 (P.L. 103-66):

- Made up to 85 percent of Social Security benefits subject to the income tax for persons whose income plus one-half of their benefits exceed \$34,000 (single) and \$44,000 (couple).
- Required States to pay fees for Federal administration of their supplementary SSI payments.

Unemployment Compensation Amendments of 1993 (P.L. 103-152):

- Increased temporarily from three years to five years the period during which the income and resources of an immigrant's sponsor will be "deemed" to the immigrant for purposes of determining the immigrant's eligibility for and the amount of SSI benefits.

1994 AMENDMENTS

Social Security Independence and Program Improvements Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-296):

- Established the Social Security Administration as an independent agency, headed by a Commissioner appointed by the President to serve a six-year term.

- Placed new restrictions on Social Security disability insurance and SSI benefit payments to individuals disabled solely by drug addiction and alcoholism (DAA).
- Required SSA to perform a minimum of 100,000 CDRs of SSI recipients each year during FY 1996 through FY 1998.

Social Security Domestic Employment Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-387):

- Raised the threshold for coverage of domestic employees' earnings paid per employer from \$50 per calendar quarter to \$1,000 in calendar year 1994. For calendar years after 1995, this amount increased in \$100 increments as average wages increase.
- Allocated a greater portion of the OASDI tax rate to the DI trust fund beginning in 1994.
- Authorized SSA to use certain delinquent debt collection procedures available to other Federal agencies.

Social Security Act Amendments of 1994 (P.L. 103-432):

- Provided that the criteria used for determining disability of children would apply to any individual who is under age 18 (i.e., individuals who do not meet the SSI definition of a child because they are married or the head of a household).

Uruguay Round Agreements Act (P.L. 103-465):

- Permitted persons to request voluntary withholding from certain Federal payments, including Social Security benefits, for income tax purposes.
- Increased from 50 to 85 percent the amount of Social Security benefits that are subject to mandatory Federal income tax withholding because they are paid to nonresident immigrants.
- Required that in order to claim a dependency exemption for Federal income tax purposes, a taxpayer must include the Tax Identification Number or Social Security Number for that dependent on his or her return, regardless of age.

1996 AMENDMENTS

Contract With America Advancement Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-121):

- Gradually raised the annual earnings exempt amount for beneficiaries who have reached normal retirement age to \$30,000 by 2002.

- Prospectively denied Social Security and SSI disability benefits to individuals disabled solely due to DAA and required SSA to perform medical redeterminations for such individuals who appealed their termination of benefits.
- Required representative payees for Social Security disability or SSI disability individuals who have a DAA condition and who are incapable of managing their benefits, and required treatment referrals for those on the rolls with DAA conditions.
- Authorized additional funding for CDRs and disability redeterminations for FY 1996 to FY 2002; and required annual reports to Congress on CDRs for those years.

Omnibus Consolidated Rescissions and Appropriations Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-134):

- Provided additional funding for processing CDRs and continued investments in automation.
- Required recurring Federal payments, including Social Security and SSI benefits (with exceptions), to persons who begin to receive them after July 1996 to be paid by electronic funds transfer.

Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-193):

- Prohibited the payment of Social Security benefits to any noncitizen in the U.S. who is not lawfully present in the U.S. (as determined by the Attorney General).
- Prohibited SSI eligibility for noncitizens with several exceptions.
- Changed SSI eligibility based on childhood disability and required SSA to conduct redeterminations on SSI children on the rolls.
- Provided for incentive payments from SSI program funds to State and local penal institutions for furnishing information (date of confinement and certain identifying information) to SSA, which results in suspension of SSI benefits.

An Act making omnibus consolidated appropriations for FY 1997 (P.L. 104-208):

- Providing funding for SSA expenses and separate funding for automation, as well as continuing disability reviews.
- Added a new category to the definition of "qualified alien."

1997 AMENDMENTS

Balanced Budget Act of 1997 (P.L. 105-33):

- Expanded the categories of noncitizens that may be eligible for SSI.
- Extended the timeframes for receiving SSI for certain aliens subject to time-limited benefits as provided in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996.

1998 AMENDMENTS

Noncitizen Benefit Clarification and Other Technical Amendment Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-306):

- Extended permanently the eligibility of all noncitizens that were receiving SSI benefits when the welfare reform law was passed in August 1996 (P.L. 104-193).
- Authorized SSA to collect SSI overpayments by offsetting Social Security benefits.

1999 AMENDMENTS

Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (P.L. 106-169):

- Authorized the Commissioner to employ certain statutory debt collection practices to collect delinquent accounts.
- Added a new title VIII (Special Benefits for Certain World War II Veterans) to the Social Security Act to provide monthly benefits for each month certain qualified World War II veterans reside outside the United States.

Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 (P.L. 106-170):

- Directed the Commissioner of Social Security to establish a Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program. A disabled beneficiary may use a ticket issued by the Commissioner to obtain employment and vocational rehabilitation services or other support services at SSA's expense.
- Established a Work Incentives Advisory Panel and a Work Incentives Outreach Program and authorizes the Commissioner to make payments to protection and advocacy systems established in each State.
- Eliminated work activity as a basis for conducting continuing disability reviews for individuals entitled to disability benefits for at least two years.

2000 AMENDMENTS

Senior Citizens' Freedom To Work Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-182):

- Eliminated the Social Security retirement earnings test in and after the month in which a person attains normal retirement age.

Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-386):

- Noncitizens, regardless of their immigration status, who are victims of "severe forms of trafficking in persons in the United States", shall be eligible for SSI to the same extent that refugees are eligible.

A WELL-RUN AGENCY

The Administration and the Congress have challenged Federal agencies to manage more efficiently for results and accountability. The Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990 (CFO), the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA), and the Government Management Reform Act of 1994 (GMRA) are all designed to promote a more effective federal government. In addition, the National Performance Review, under Vice President Gore's direction, is aimed at making government work better and cost less. SSA strongly supported these efforts as important and necessary steps to improving its management. According to the General Accounting Office, SSA has surpassed many other Federal agencies in these areas. SSA is ahead of many Federal agencies in managing for results and improving financial accountability.¹⁴

ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS

The cost to administer the Social Security Program is extraordinarily low – less than one percent of net payroll contributions from taxpayers. In FY 1999, the total cost was \$3.36 billion.¹⁵ These costs included employees' salaries and benefits, maintaining office buildings, office supplies, office automation systems, payments to the states to administer the DDSs, and every other expense related to the program.

¹⁴ Social Security Administration: Effective Leadership Needed to Meet the Daunting Challenges, GAO/T-OGC-96-7, July 25, 1996.

¹⁵ The 2000 Annual Report of the Board of Trustees, page 5.

In FY 1999, the administrative costs of the Retirement and Survivors Program were 0.5 percent of contributions to the OASI Trust Fund, and the administrative costs of the Disability Program were 2.5 percent of contributions to the DI Trust Fund. The combined costs of the OASDI Programs were .07 percent of contributions to the combined OASI and DI Trust Funds.

NET ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES AS A PERCENTAGE OF CONTRIBUTION INCOME AND OF BENEFIT PAYMENTS, BY TRUST FUND, FISCAL YEARS 1995-1999.¹⁶

Fiscal Year	OASI Trust Fund		DI Trust Fund		OASI and DI Trust Funds, combined	
	Contribution Income	Benefit Payments	Contribution Income	Benefit Payments	Contribution Income	Benefit Payments
1993	0.7	0.8	3.0	2.8	0.9	1.0
1994	.6	.7	3.1	2.8	.8	.9
1995	.6	.6	1.6	2.7	.8	.9
1996	.6	.6	1.9	2.5	.8	.8
1997	.6	.6	2.2	2.7	.8	.9
1998	.6	.6	2.7	3.3	.9	1.0
1999	.5	.6	2.5	3.0	.7	.9

SSI payments and related administrative expenses are financed from general tax revenues, not the Social Security Trust Funds. In FY 1999, the administrative costs of the SSI program were 8.4 percent of benefit payments. The combined administrative costs of the OASDI and SSI programs were 1.7 percent of benefit payments in FY 1999.¹⁷

¹⁶ The 1995 Annual Report of the Board of Trustees, page 54; the 2000 Annual Report of the Board of Trustees, page 51.

¹⁷ Performance and Accountability Report for Fiscal Year 2000, page 4.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICERS ACT (CFO) OF 1990 AND THE GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT REFORM ACT (GMRA) OF 1994

The major purposes of the CFO Act were to correct longstanding shortcomings in financial systems, internal controls, and the use of assets, and to produce more reliable and useful financial information. The purposes of GMRA were to provide a more effective, efficient, and responsive government through a series of Federal management reforms, primarily in human resources and financial management. It builds on the CFO Act.

SSA was a leader among Federal agencies in producing complete, accurate, and timely financial statements as required by the CFO Act and GMRA. The Agency had a 13-year history of issuing audited financial statements, and from FY 1991 to the present, has had the distinction of being the first Federal agency every year to issue its audited financial statement. Since FY 1994, SSA's financial statements have received an unqualified opinion. The financial statements were prepared in accordance with requirements of the Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board, the Office of Management and Budget, the Chief Financial Officers Act and other relevant statutes.

SSA's financial statements demonstrated that the Agency operated in a business-like manner, properly exercised its stewardship role and fiduciary responsibilities for the Social Security trust funds, and determined the adequacy of the Social Security trust funds, both now and well into the future. SSA's financial statements were comprehensive and covered all SSA-administered programs.

In 1999, in partnership with the Association of Government Accountants, the Chief Financial Officer's Council established the Certificate of Excellence in Accounting Reporting awards program to recognize the importance of accountability reporting in improving Government operations. SSA was one of only two Federal agencies to receive the first-ever Certificate of Excellence in Accounting Reporting in its inaugural year. (The other agency was the National Aeronautics and Space Administration). And, once again, in 2000, SSA was one of two Federal agencies to receive the Certificate, sharing the honor with the National Science Foundation. The Certificate was the highest form of recognition in Federal Government financial management reporting and represents a significant accomplishment for SSA. It was evidence of the fair presentation of the programmatic and financial affairs of a Federal agency.

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS ACT (GPRA) OF 1993

GPRA sought to shift the focus of government decisionmaking and accountability away from a preoccupation with the activities performed (outputs) to a focus on the results, service quality, and customer satisfaction of those activities (outcomes). Federal agencies were held accountable for achieving program results.

In October 1997, SSA published *Keeping the Promise*, the Agency's third strategic plan (ASP), and the first under GPRA.¹⁸ It is also the first strategic plan since SSA became an independent agency in 1995. The ASP was developed with broad input from internal and external stakeholders, and served as the focal point for a major communications effort to employees throughout the Agency.

In developing the ASP, SSA not only looked at its traditional role of administering the Social Security programs, but also at its new status as an independent agency. While its emphasis remained on a longstanding commitment to quality, service and effective program administration, the Agency also acknowledged its broadened role in providing program leadership.

SSA's Accountability Report for FY 1999 included its first Annual Performance Report required under GPRA.¹⁹ It contained actual performance achieved in FY 1999 compared with its performance targets. During FY 1999, SSA was able to meet 60 percent of the FY 1999 goals.

NATIONAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW (NPR)

The National Performance Review, now known as the National Partnership for Reinventing Government (NPR), was the Clinton Administration's core effort to reform the Federal Government during most of the last decade. SSA has worked closely with NPR on improving and reinventing the way it does business. Commissioners Chater and Apfel committed SSA to the central NPR tenets – putting people first, adopting best-in-business service standards, and pursuing innovative changes that enable the Agency to “work better and cost less.” Customer-responsive service and maintaining program integrity figured prominently in SSA's strategic goals and were supported by numerous specific objectives and measures.

HAMMER AWARDS

Vice-President Gore's Hammer Award honors teams who worked to improve customer service and free federal government of useless rules and red tape. Since 1994, SSA had been honored with 81 Hammer Awards. Some of these efforts were one-time-only projects; some were ongoing and have developed further over the years; and some were prototypes that have been replicated in other parts of the country.

¹⁸ Social Security: “Keeping the Promise,” Strategic Plan 1997-2002, September, 1997.

¹⁹ Social Security: Accountability Report For Fiscal Year 1999, November, 1999. Pgs 56-79.

MAXWELL SCHOOL RECOGNITION

SSA was ahead of most agencies in managing for results. The Clinton Administration identified 32 Federal agencies as having a “high impact” on the American public. The Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University (Maxwell) rated the performance of 20 of the Federal agencies in 1999 and 2000. SSA received the highest marks among the 20 Federal agencies. SSA received an overall survey rating of “A” – only one of two agencies to do so. (The other agency was the Coast Guard.) The categories were financial management, human resources, information technology, capital management, and managing for results. The Maxwell report described a bright management picture at SSA. Social Security's emphasis on efficient administration and service delivery was what won it high marks.

SSA'S NATIONAL 800-NUMBER

SSA's National 800-Number Network operation was the most active in the Federal Government and one of the largest 800-number networks in the nation. SSA has 36 teleservice centers located throughout the country. The 800-number is the initial contact for a large percentage of SSA's customers and receives an average of 65 million calls a year.

In April 1995, SSA was rated as the best telephone customer service from a list of nine “World Class” service organizations in an unsolicited study. Dalbar, Inc., an outside independent financial firm, rated eight private companies (Federal Express, AT&T Universal Credit Cards, Nordstrom, Southwest Airlines, L. L. Bean, Disney Companies, Saturn Corporation and Xerox) along with SSA in three qualitative areas: the attitude, accommodation, and knowledge of their representatives; and two quantitative ones: ring time and time on hold. SSA ranked number one in the first three categories, but lost points for keeping callers on hold. SSA still rated number one because of the exceptionally courteous, knowledgeable, and efficient service that callers received after reaching the Agency.

CIO MAGAZINE

In 2000, SSA was the only major Federal agency named a “2000 CIO-100 honoree” by CIO Magazine. SSA was cited along with such major corporations as Amazon.com Inc., Chase Manhattan Corp., Ford Motor Co., Marriott International, and Intel Corp. SSA was recognized for demonstrating an innovative and sophisticated customer service approach that made the customer central to its business.

Y2K

Preparing for the change of century date – from 1999 to 2000 – was one of the biggest challenges ever to face the technology industry. SSA recognized the potential impact of the Y2K problem as early as 1989 and began early efforts to ensure that the January 2000 Social Security benefits were issued and delivered timely. The General Accounting Office, in 1999, recognized the Agency as a Federal leader in addressing Y2K readiness.²⁰

SSA first noticed the year 2000 problem in 1989 when a system “broke.” It was a system that tracked repayments of people who owed SSA money because they were overpaid. Someone in a Social Security field office tried to input a repayment schedule out to the year 2000. The system abended, which meant it came to an abrupt ending. It didn’t work. SSA did a work-around to get the system back up manually. When the agency saw what went wrong, it realized that other systems were going to break. SSA then set up pilot projects to get an idea of the magnitude of the problem.²¹

President Clinton announced at an event at the White House on December 28, 1998, that the Social Security Administration had completed its preparations for the Year 2000 – a full year ahead of schedule, ensuring the government’s ability to deliver benefit checks to millions of Americans into the new millennium without computer problems. *“The Social Security system is now 100 percent compliant with our standards and safeguards for the year 2000.”* the President said.

SSA worked closely with the Treasury Department, Federal Reserve Bank, and the U.S. Postal Service to ensure that the Social Security and SSI benefit payments due in January 2000 were paid on time. Service to the public continued without interruption as the century date changed.

TRAGEDY

On April 19, 1995, at 9:02 a.m. Central Time, SSA experienced its greatest tragedy in the terrorist bomb attack on the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. The Social Security office was located on the first floor of the building. Sixteen SSA employees were among the 168 people who lost their lives.

²⁰ Social Security Administration: Update on Year 2000 and Other Key Information Technology Initiatives (GAO/T-AIMD-99-259, July 29, 1999).

²¹ Interview with Social Security Assistant Deputy Commissioner for Systems Kathleen Adams, by the Government Computer News Magazine.

The Agency established a memorial garden at its national headquarters in Baltimore to honor the SSA victims who died in the explosion. A committee of management, union, headquarters, and field employees, including a survivor of the blast, helped design the symbolic display, which captures SSA's sense of loss.

President Clinton, in his 1996 State of the Union address, identified Richard Dean as an Oklahoma City Social Security employee who joined First Lady Hillary Clinton in her box at the event. The President recognized Richard for saving the lives of three women. He applauded him for *"both his public service and his extraordinary personal heroism."* The President went on to say that Richard was forced out of his office when the government shut down. *"And the second time the Government shutdown, he continued helping Social Security recipients, but he was working without pay."*

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

In the fall of 1995, the nation experienced an unprecedented event. Due to a budget deadlock in Congress, the Federal Government shutdown twice. The first shutdown was from November 14, 1995 through November 19, 1995, and the second was from December 16, 1995, through January 5, 1996.

The four-day furlough in November 1995 significantly impacted the Agency's service to the public. SSA's contingency plan allowed for the retention of 4,780 employees, while the other 61,415 were placed in furlough status. The American public was unable to conduct its business with SSA, and the effect of the shutdown was felt immediately. During the second day of the shutdown, President Clinton announced that Commissioner Chater had directed employees in direct service positions be recalled to work. A continuing resolution was passed and all federal workers returned to work on Monday, November 20, 1995.

The second shutdown, which began December 16, 1995, was the longest in history. Based on the experience during the November lapse in appropriations and the loss of four full days of production time, any further interruption in service would have had devastating long-term impact on SSA's ability to process claims for benefits. Therefore, 55,000 direct service employees continued to report to work, and all other employees remained furloughed. Approximately 11,000 employees remained in furlough status. On January 5, 1996, President Clinton signed a continuing resolution through January 26, authorizing the immediate return of all Federal civilian employees affected by the lapse in appropriations.

THE GIFT ENDURES

In 1935, while there were long debate and votes on many amendments, the Congress passed the Social Security Act by an overwhelming majority. In the House, the vote was 372 yeas, 33 nays and 25 not voting. The vote in the Senate was equally positive, with 77 yeas, 6 nays and 12 not voting. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the Act into law on August 14, 1935. Despite the strong support, there was vocal opposition to the Act, both in the Congress and externally. The minority members of the House Ways and Means Committee said it would impose a crushing burden upon industry and upon labor. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers opposed the bill. It became an issue in the 1936 Presidential election. The unsuccessful Presidential candidate alleged that Social Security was "a fraud on the working man" and a cruel hoax.²² The naysayers questioned the constitutionality of the Act and predicted Social Security's demise. But the program outlived its early detractors and, during the Clinton Administration, Social Security celebrated its 60th and 65th anniversaries.

At a ceremony commemorating the 60th Anniversary of Social Security in 1995, Commissioner Chater, with the assistance of First Lady Hillary Clinton and Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, launched a series of public service announcements to educate the public about the value of Social Security benefits. The campaign, announced at a press conference in Washington, D.C. on August 14, 1995, was unveiled to coincide with the 60th anniversary of Social Security and focused on the real-life stories of two families. The announcements were part of a public information campaign to inform younger workers about the value of their Social Security taxes.

A Baltimore fire department inspector, his wife and son are living the American dream. Suddenly his family's lives are shattered when his wife tragically dies while giving birth to their second child. A young admissions clerk at a trade school in Philadelphia is just beginning to get her feet on solid financial ground when a crippling spinal cord injury forces her to stop working.

Social Security was the common link. The fire inspector's children received monthly survivor's benefits because their mother worked and paid Social Security taxes. The former admissions clerk, with the help of her disability payments, went on to graduate school, to become a counselor to other people with disabilities.

The 65th Anniversary was recognized with a special program at the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Presidential Library in Hyde Park, N.Y., on August 5, 2000. On August 14, 2000,²³ Commissioner Apfel dedicated a 65th Anniversary Garden on the grounds of SSA headquarters in Baltimore. He described the Garden and its purpose:

²² John Winant, the Republican minority member of the Social Security Board resigned in order to be free to defend the Act.

²³ 65th anniversary of the August 14, 1935, signing of the Social Security Act.

"Today we are celebrating the 65th anniversary of the Social Security program. Many would agree that this program is the most successful domestic program in our nation's history, as well as one of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's most important and lasting legacies. In many ways, it was his gift of hope to the American people during a very bleak period in our history. And the gift has endured."

President Clinton, throughout his eight years in office, worked to strengthen Social Security. He spoke about the Social Security program often and said:

"it reflects some of our deepest values – the duties we owe to our parents, the duties we owe to each other when we're differently situated in life, the duties we owe to our children and our grandchildren. Indeed, it reflects our determination to move forward across the generations and across the income divides in our country, as one America."²⁴

²⁴ Remarks by the President on Social Security, Gaston Hall, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., February 9, 1998.

CHRONOLOGY OF SSA EVENTS – 1993-2000

1993

- January 20, 1993 Louis D. Enoff began his tenure as Acting Commissioner of Social Security on October 1, 1992 and served until July 18, 1993.
- January 22, 1993 Donna E. Shalala became Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS).
- April 7, 1993 The 1993 Trustees Report showed the date of the combined Old Age Survivors and Disability Insurance (OASDI) Trust Funds exhaustion as 2036.
- June 22, 1993 SSA signed International Totalization Agreement with Greece.
- July 19, 1993 Dr. Lawrence Thompson appointed Acting Commissioner of Social Security and Principal Deputy Commissioner by HHS Secretary Shalala.
- August 10, 1993 President Clinton signed the *Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993* (P.L. 103-66).
- September 1993 SSA made the decision to reengineer the disability process.
- September 7, 1993 First report issued of Vice President Al Gore's National Performance Review.
- September 15, 1993 President Clinton nominated Dr. Shirley Sears Chater of Texas as Commissioner of Social Security.
- October 1993 The automatic cost-of-living (COLA) for benefits for December 1993 (paid in January 1994) was 2.6 percent.
- October 7, 1993 The Senate confirmed Dr. Chater as Commissioner of Social Security.
- October 8, 1993 Shirley S. Chater became Commissioner of Social Security.
- November 24, 1993 President Clinton signed the *Unemployment Compensation Amendments of 1993* (P.L. 103-152).

1994

- March 2, 1994 President Clinton appoints Alan "Scotty" Campbell as Chairman of the bipartisan Commission on the Social Security "Notch" Issue.
- March 31, 1994 Proposal of the Disability Process Redesign workgroup released to Commissioner Chater.
- April 12, 1994 The 1994 Trustees Report showed the date of the combined OASDI Trust Funds exhaustion as 2029.
- May 17, 1994 SSA's Internet site was launched on the World-Wide Web (*SSA Online* at <http://www.ssa.gov>).
- June 1994 Commissioner Chater appointed Judy L. Chesser as Associate Commissioner for Legislation and Congressional Affairs. She was later named as Deputy Commissioner for Legislation and Congressional Affairs in March 1995 when SSA became an independent agency.
- June 6, 1994 Vice President Gore visited SSA headquarters to present SSA's first Hammer Award for its achievements in reinventing government.
- June 9, 1994 The members of the 1994 Social Security Advisory Council are named by HHS Secretary Shalala.
- June 9, 1994 The Office of Personnel Management presented the OPM Director's Award to SSA for outstanding work and family programs.
- June 22, 1994 Commissioner Chater and American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) President John Sturdivant signed the first national partnership agreement between SSA and AFGE. This partnership agreement marked the beginning of a new culture where labor and management shared accountability in accomplishing the Agency's mission of providing quality public service.
- July 1994 Following publication in the Federal Register and close of the public comment period, the final disability reengineering redesign proposal was released to Commissioner Chater.
- August 1994 Commissioner Chater appointed Dr. Susan M. Daniels Associate Commissioner for Disability. She was later named by Commissioner Apfel as Deputy Commissioner for Policy and Income Security Programs in April 1998 under a reorganization of one program and policy functions within SSA.

- August 1994 Commissioner Chater appointed Carolyn W. Colvin as Deputy Commissioner for Policy and External Affairs. She was later named as Deputy Commissioner for Programs, Policy, Evaluation and Communications in March 1995 when SSA became an independent agency. Commissioner Apfel appointed Ms. Colvin as Deputy Commissioner for Operations in April 1998.
- August 15, 1994 President Clinton signed the *Social Security Independence and Program Improvements Act of 1994* (P.L. 103-296).
- September 1994 Commissioner Chater appointed Brian Coyne as SSA's Chief of Staff.
- September 1994 Commissioner Chater approved the disability-reengineering redesign and the final plan was released.
- October 1994 The automatic cost-of-living (COLA) for benefits for December 1994 (paid in January 1995) was 2.8 percent.
- October 1994 Lori L. Hansen was appointed by the Senate to serve on the Social Security Advisory Board. Her term is from October 1994 to September 2000.
- October 1994 Carolyn L. Weaver was appointed by the Senate to serve on the Social Security Advisory Board. Her term is from October 1994 to September 1997.
- October 22, 1994 President Clinton signed the *Social Security Domestic Employment Act of 1994* (P.L. 103-387).
- October 31, 1994 President Clinton signed the *Social Security Act Amendments of 1994* (P.L. 103-432).
- November 1994 Arthur "Pete" Singleton was appointed by the House to serve on the Social Security Advisory Board. His term was from November 1994 to October 1998. Mr. Singleton resigned in October 1996 to be the Majority Staff Director, House Ways and Means Committee.
- November 1994 Martha Keys was appointed by the House to serve on the Social Security Advisory Board. Her term was from November 1994 to September 1999.
- November 15, 1994 President Clinton nominated Shirley Chater to serve a six-year term as Commissioner of the independent SSA.

- December 1994 Commissioner Chater appointed Joan E. Wainwright as Associate Commissioner for Public Affairs. She was later named as Associate Commissioner for Communications in March 1995 when SSA became an independent agency, and then as Deputy Commissioner for Communications in June 1996 when the Office of Communications reported directly to the Commissioner of SSA.
- December 31, 1994 The bipartisan Commission on the Social Security "Notch" Issue released its report: *"Final Report on the Social Security 'Notch' Issue."* The central finding of the Commission was that benefits paid to those in the 'Notch' years were equitable, and no remedial legislation was in order.

1995

- February 1995 SSA's first *General Business Plan* published.
- February 16, 1995 A confirmation hearing was held before the Senate Finance Committee on Commissioner Chater's nomination to serve a six-year term as Commissioner of Social Security. The Committee did not take any action on her nomination.
- March 31, 1995 The Social Security Administration became an independent agency.
- April 3, 1995 The 1995 Trustees Report showed the date of the combined OASDI Trust Funds exhaustion as 2030, a gain of one year from the year before.
- April 1995 Commissioner Chater appointed Arthur J. Fried as General Counsel.
- April 1995 Dalbar Financial Services, Inc., a source for information on customer service initiatives and trends rated SSA's telephone service representatives 1st in Accommodations, Attitude, Knowledge, and Ring Time in its World Class Benchmarking study. Other companies in the study were AT&T Universal Credit Cards, Disney Companies, Federal Express, L.L. Bean, Nordstrom, The Saturn Corporation, Southwest Airlines, and Xerox.
- April 13, 1995 President Clinton appointed the Commissioner of Social Security to be a member of his Domestic Policy Council.
- April 19, 1995 The Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma was bombed, killing 168 individuals, including 16 SSA employees.
- July 20, 1995 Dr. Marilyn Moon and Stephen G. Kellison, who were nominated by President Clinton, were confirmed by the Senate to serve four-year terms

as Public Trustee of the Old Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance trust funds. Their terms began on July 20, 1995.

- August 1995 The President uses "recess appointment" to appoint former U.S. Senator Harlan Mathews to serve on the Social Security Advisory Board from January 1996 to January 1997. He served as Chair of the Board. Senator Mathews declined the resubmission of his nomination.
- August 1995 The President uses "recess appointment" to appoint Gerald M. Shea to the Social Security Advisory Board from January 1996 to January 1997.
- August 1995 The President uses "recess appointment" to appoint William C. Brooks as a Presidential recess appointee to the Social Security Advisory Board from January 1996 to September 1996.
- August 10, 1995 President Clinton nominated Linda Colvin Rhodes of Pennsylvania to be Deputy Commissioner of Social Security.
- August 10, 1995 President Clinton nominated David Williams to be Inspector General at SSA.
- August 14, 1995 A series of public service announcements was launched by Commissioner Chater to educate the public about the value of Social Security benefits at a ceremony held at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. Commissioner Chater was joined by First Lady Hillary Clinton and Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan in celebrating the 60th Anniversary of Social Security.
- October 1995 The automatic cost-of-living (COLA) for benefits for December 1995 (paid in January 1996) was 2.6 percent.
- October 19, 1995 A Memorial Garden was dedicated in front of SSA headquarters in Baltimore, MD, to commemorate the SSA employees who lost their lives in the Oklahoma City bombing.
- November 14, 1995 Government-wide shutdown began, which lasted until November 20th.
- December 12, 1995 SSA held Hammer Award Ceremony for 14 teams, workgroups, or projects.
- December 16, 1995 Second Government shutdown began, which lasted until January 6th.
- December 22, 1995 David Williams was confirmed by the Senate as Inspector General at SSA.

December 31, 1995 Lawrence Thompson resigned as Principal Deputy Commissioner and took a position with the Urban Institute.

1996

January 3, 1996 Commissioner Chater named John R. Dyer as Acting Principal Deputy Commissioner.

January 23, 1996 Claims Representative Richard Dean, an SSA employee who survived the Oklahoma City bombing, was invited to sit with Mrs. Clinton during the President's annual State of the Union Address. The President introduced Mr. Dean in the course of his remarks.

February 9, 1996 First meeting of the new SSA Advisory Board was held in Baltimore.

February 28, 1996 Commissioner Chater announced a set of policy changes to improve the effectiveness of the Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS) feature of the SSI program. The changes grew out of a SSA workgroup report, along with audit reports by the General Accounting Office, SSA's Inspector General, and SSA's Office of Program and Integrity Reviews.

March 1996 Commissioner Chater appointed D. Dean Mesterharm as Deputy Commissioner for Systems.

March 5, 1996 Commissioner Chater and AFGE President John Sturdivant signed a national partnership agreement between AFGE and SSA effective March 5, 1996.

March 11, 1996 Linda Colvin Rhodes, nominated to be Deputy Commissioner of Social Security, withdrew from consideration. The Senate had taken no action on the nomination.

March 11, 1996 Commissioner Chater announced that SSA agreed to settle the case of *Hart vs. Chater* in which a child, conceived through artificial means after the death of her father, was previously denied survivors benefits. SSA's position was that the settlement was not precedent-setting.

March 21, 1996 SSA launched its Interactive Video Teletraining (IVT) System with an inaugural broadcast to the International Distance Learning Conference in Crystal City, Virginia. SSA planned to use IVT to replace most of its in-person training in order to save money on travel and related training expenses.

- March 25-27, 1996 A government-wide conference on "reinventing government" was held in Bethesda, Maryland. Vice President Gore was the keynote speaker. He singled-out SSA's 800-number for praise for its highly rated service.
- March 29, 1996 President Clinton signed the *Contract With America Advancement Act of 1996* (P.L. 104-121).
- April 1996 SSA received Hammer Award for the Birmingham Telephone Claims unit.
- April 15, 1996 The Social Security Advisory Council held its final public meeting in Washington, D.C.
- April 24, 1996 SSA published final rules in the Federal Register that established procedures under which SSA may impose civil monetary penalties on any Social Security or SSI applicant or beneficiary who makes a false statement in order to obtain benefits. This civil authority is in addition to any criminal penalties that may apply, and is a new power granted to SSA under Section 206(b) of the *Social Security Independence and Program Improvements Act of 1994*.
- April 26, 1996 President Clinton signed the *Omnibus Consolidated Rescissions and Appropriations Act of 1996* (P.L. 104-134).
- April 28-29, 1996 The Social Security Representative Payment Advisory Committee met at SSA headquarters in Baltimore to discuss recommendations for changes in representative payee policies and procedures.
- June 5, 1996 The 1996 Trustees Report showed the date of the combined OASDI Trust Funds exhaustion as 2029, a gain of one year from last year.
- June 7, 1996 Termination notices began going out to 220,000 Social Security and SSI disability beneficiaries who were receiving benefits due to drug addiction or alcoholism. Under the law, these benefits were to be stopped by January 1, 1997.
- June 14, 1996 SSA awarded its IWS/LAN computer systems contract to the Unisys Corporation. The initial award was for \$185,195,445 with a projected seven-year value of \$279,596,486. The contract provides for the acquisition of all equipment needed to support a base quantity of 925 Local Area Networks (LANs), with an optional quantity of an additional 817 LANs.
- June 20-22, 1996 SSA's Advisory Committees for Black, Hispanic, Pacific Asian, Women, and Employees with Disabilities held their first joint "diversity conference" in Miami, Florida.

- August 22, 1996 President Clinton signed the "*Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996*." This "welfare reform" legislation terminated SSI eligibility for most non-citizens and made more stringent the standards for children to receive SSI disability benefits.
- September 5, 1996 SSA Hammer Award Ceremony for 13 teams or projects.
- September 12, 1996 SSA received the " Best in Class " award at the Internet Commerce Expo (sponsored by Computer World Magazine) in the Government/Public Administration category for its implementation of the Personal Earnings and Benefit Estimate Statement (PEBES).
- September 30, 1996 President Clinton signed *An Act making omnibus consolidated appropriations for FY 1997* (P.L. 104-208). This law included SSA's FY 1997 appropriations and the *Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996*.
- October 1996 The automatic cost-of-living (COLA) for benefits for December 1996 (paid in January 1997) was 2.9 percent.
- November 5, 1996 Commissioner Shirley S. Chater submitted her resignation to President Clinton, effective January 31, 1997. She extended her effective date to February 28, 1997, at the request of the President. She took a position as Regents Professor in the University of California System.
- November 7, 1996 The Representative Payee Advisory Committee submitted its final report to the Commissioner. The Committee, composed of outside experts, made 25 specific recommendations for improving SSA's administration of the representative payee function.
- November 25, 1996 SSA's Office of the Inspector General opened a Social Security Fraud Hotline at 1-800-269-0271.
- December 1996 The SSA field office structure was revised. The new structure eliminated the District Office, Branch Office, and Resident Station designations. All sites were redesignated as Level 1, 2, 3, or 4 Social Security Field Offices. As of that point, there were a total of 1,352 "Social Security Field Offices."

1997

- January 6, 1997 The Social Security Advisory Council released its report. The Council offered three options for changing Social Security: (1) a Maintain Benefits

- plan; (2) an Individual Accounts plan; and (3) a Personal Savings Account plan.
- January 13, 1997 SSA received Hammer Award for the Direct Services Unit (redeployment of personnel).
- February 11, 1997 SSA's proposed regulations implementing the changes to the childhood disability standards were published in the *Federal Register*.
- February 11, 1997 SSA's proposed final regulations for cycling of benefit payments were published.
- February 26, 1997 President Clinton named Dr. John J. Callahan to be Acting Commissioner of Social Security effective March 1, 1997. Dr. Callahan was the HHS Assistant Secretary for Management and Budget at the time of his appointment. He served as Acting Commissioner until September 29, 1997.
- March 1997 The Social Security Advisory Board issued its first formal report, entitled "*Developing Social Security Policy: How the Social Security Administration Can Provide Greater Policy Leadership.*"
- March 1997 Jo Anne Barnhart was appointed by the House to serve on the Social Security Advisory Board. Her term is from March 1997 to September 1998. Ms. Barnhart replaced Arthur "Pete" Singleton who resigned to accept a position of staff director on the House Ways & Means Committee.
- March 1997 Acting Commissioner Callahan appointed Paul Barnes as Deputy Commissioner for Human Resources.
- April 2, 1997 SSA announced new rules in the Federal Register that eliminated the Annual Earnings Reports previously required from retirees under age 70 who are still working. SSA will now use information from the W-2 reports or tax records to track the earnings levels of working beneficiaries.
- April 9, 1997 SSA announced that it was temporarily suspending its Online Personal Earnings and Benefit Estimate Statement (PEBES) service over the Internet due to questions raised in the news media about the security and privacy of the records. Following the publication of the news stories on April 7th, SSA experienced a surge in traffic to its Internet site that at its peak included 600 requests per second.

- April 10, 1997 Acting Commissioner John J. Callahan announced that SSA would hire 150 former welfare recipients each year for four years as SSA's contribution to the President's welfare reform initiatives.
- April 24, 1997 The 1997 Trustees Report showed the date of the combined OASDI Trust Funds exhaustion as 2029, the same as last year.
- May 1997 The cycling of Social Security benefit payments began for June 1997 checks.
- May 1997 SSA received Hammer Award for the Ft. Myers Team Experiment that involved a union and management agreement to delegate authority to employees.
- May 23, 1997 President Clinton nominated Kenneth S. Apfel to serve as the 13th Commissioner of Social Security. Mr. Apfel was the Associate Director for Human Resources at OMB at the time of his nomination. Prior to that, he was HHS's Assistant Secretary for Management and Budget.
- May 30, 1997 The first *Annual Report of the Supplemental Security Income Program* was released to President Clinton and to the Congress. In the *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996*, the Congress required the Commissioner of Social Security to report annually on the status of the SSI program. In January 1997, 6.3 million individuals received Federal SSI payments averaging \$342 per month. Federal expenditures for cash payments under the SSI program during calendar 1996 totaled \$26.5 billion, and the cost of administering the SSI program in FY 1996 was \$2.0 billion.
- June 23, 1997 Hammer Award Ceremony for 25 units, teams, or projects was held at SSA's headquarters.
- August 5, 1997 President Clinton signed H.R. 2015, "*The Balanced Budget Act of 1997*," into law. This law restores SSI eligibility to certain cohorts of non-citizens whose eligibility otherwise would be terminated under the "welfare reform" of 1996.
- September 1997 SSA issued a report, Options for Enhancing the Social Security Card. The report was requested by Congress in the welfare and immigration reform laws (P.L. 104-193 and P.L. 104-208, respectively) passed in 1996.
- September 2, 1997 President Clinton nominated Jane G. Gould of New York to be Deputy Commissioner of Social Security.

- September 4, 1997 Acting Commissioner John Callahan released the report of the study of SSA's online PEBES service and announced the Agency's decision to make the service available again beginning in January 1998. The new version of the service will have additional security and privacy safeguards. Earnings information will no longer be provided online (only benefit estimates) and a personal code will be needed to receive the benefit estimate.
- September 8-12, 1997 SSA's first National Anti-Fraud Conference was held in Baltimore. The theme of the conference was *New Approaches in a New Environment*. Over 450 SSA employees attended the Conference along with officials from the General Accounting Office and State disability determination units.
- September 19, 1997 Kenneth S. Apfel was unanimously confirmed by the Senate as SSA's 13th Commissioner and first Commissioner of the Independent Agency.
- September 23, 1997 Former Commissioner of Social Security Stanford G. Ross was nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate to serve on the Social Security Advisory Board from October 1997 to September 2002. President Clinton named him as Chair of the Board.
- September 29, 1997 Kenneth Apfel became the Commissioner of Social Security. A formal swearing-in ceremony was held at SSA Headquarters. Outgoing Acting Commissioner Callahan conducted the swearing-in, and Franklin Raines, Director of the Office of Management and Budget represented the White House.
- October 1997 The automatic cost-of-living (COLA) for benefits for December 1997 (paid in January 1998) was 2.1 percent.
- October 2, 1997 Commissioner Apfel formally released the new strategic plan, *Keeping the Promise: Strategic Plan 1997-2002*, to the Agency's senior staff and announced his intention to use the plan as the foundation of SSA's decisionmaking for the future.
- December 1, 1997 World AIDS Day—The Commissioner affirmed SSA's commitment to working with many AIDS advocacy groups to ensure that people affected by HIV/AIDS were educated about Social Security programs for which they may be eligible.
- December 16, 1997 Commissioner Apfel announced, that in response to President Clinton's commitment to making modern computer technology an integral part of every classroom in America, SSA donated over 600 surplus computers to schools across the USA to kick-off their "Computers for Kids" program.

December 17, 1997 Commissioner Apfel announced the results of his "top to bottom" review of the SSI childhood disability determination process.

1998

January 1998 Sylvester J. Schieber was appointed by the Senate to serve on the Social Security Advisory Board. His term is from January 1998 to September 2003. He replaced Carolyn Weaver on the Board.

January 27, 1998 In his State of the Union address President Clinton emphasized the central task of addressing the solvency of the Social Security program. He stated his view that any budget surplus should not be used in any way until we "Save Social Security First."

February 9, 1998 President Clinton delivered a major address on Social Security at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. as the unofficial launch of the year-long process of discussing the future of Social Security.

February 18, 1998 Notices were sent to 86,000 families whose child, or children, previously lost SSI eligibility under the Welfare Reform law. The notices provide a second opportunity to either request an appeal or to request payment continuation during appeal. This is one of the actions flowing out of Commissioner Apfel's review of the childhood disability program and announced in his December 1997 report.

March 13, 1998 Jane G. Gould, nominated to be the Deputy Commissioner of Social Security, withdrew from consideration. The Senate had taken no action on the nomination.

April 7, 1998 President Clinton participated in the first of the three national forums on Social Security (The Great Social Security Debate). The forum was held on the campus of Penn Valley Community College in Kansas City, Missouri.

April 12, 1998 Commissioner Apfel appointed Dr. Jane L. Ross as Deputy Commissioner for Policy.

April 16, 1998 SSA published in the Federal Register a notice requesting applications for a cooperative agreement to establish a Retirement Research Consortium based in two universities and supporting SSA's policy development process.

- April 30, 1998 The 1998 Trustees Report showed the date of the combined OASDI Trust Funds exhaustion as 2032, a gain of three years from last year.
- May 1998 Commissioner Apfel appointed Yvette S. Jackson as Deputy Commissioner for Finance, Assessment and Management.
- May 6, 1998 SSA published a final regulation in the Federal Register governing procedures for acquiescing in circuit court decisions which conflict with the Agency's interpretation of the Act or regulations.
- May 29, 1998 SSA released its second *Annual Report of the Supplemental Security Income Program*. In January 1998, 6.2 million individuals received monthly Federal SSI payments averaging \$335. Federal expenditures for cash payments under the SSI program during calendar 1997 totaled \$26.7 billion, and the cost of administering the SSI program in FY 1997 was \$2.1 billion.
- June 22, 1998 President Clinton issued an order directing SSA to cooperate with other federal agencies in a concerted effort to promote utilization of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) enacted into law in 1997. Among other things, SSA will distribute information and application forms in its local field offices.
- July 1, 1998 Vice President Gore participated in the second national forum on Social Security held in Providence, RI.
- July 6, 1998 President Clinton launched a new campaign to ensure that eligible Medicare beneficiaries are informed about the Qualified Medicare Beneficiary (QMB) provisions of the law, which pays Medicare premiums for poor beneficiaries. SSA and HHS will have joint responsibility for a massive public information and outreach campaign.
- July 27, 1998 President Clinton hosted the third national forum on the future of Social Security held in Albuquerque, New Mexico.
- August 12, 1998 SAP America/Stevie Wonder Vision Awards Program recognized SSA as the winner of the Siemens Award Of Excellence and received \$35,000 for its technology infrastructure to support visually impaired employees.
- August 12, 1998 SSA received the Hammer Award for the Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA) Screening unit.

- August 13, 1998 SSA hosted its "One America" diversity conference in Atlanta, Georgia. The program included prominent speakers, workshops and exhibits, providing valuable information about customer service, professional skills, career planning, personal motivation and technological advances.
- September 9, 1998 SSA received the John Sturdivant National Partnership Award.
- September 24, 1998 SSA held a Hammer Award Ceremony for nine teams or projects.
- October 1998 The automatic cost-of-living (COLA) for benefits for December 1998 (paid in January 1999) was 1.3 percent.
- October 1998 Jo Anne Barnhart was appointed by the House to serve on the Social Security Advisory Board. Her term is from October 1998 to September 2004. This is Ms. Barnhart's second term on the Board.
- October 2, 1998 SSA announced the selection of two university research consortiums to be participants in SSA's Retirement Research Consortium (SRRC). The two lead universities are Boston College and the University of Michigan, in partnership with 13 additional collaborators.
- October 9, 1998 SSA published its first *SSI Management Report* assessing the management challenges facing the program and what SSA is doing to meet them.
- October 27, 1998 As part of the national discussion on Social Security, the President hosted a roundtable discussion on women and retirement security at the White House on October 27. The White House released a paper, Women and Retirement Security at this event that details some basic facts on women and retirement, including the importance of Social Security.
- October 28, 1998 President Clinton signed the *Noncitizen Benefit Clarification and Other Technical Amendment Act of 1998* (P.L. 105-306).
- November 4, 1998 Vice President Gore announced a new federal policy designed to make it easier for victims of domestic violence to obtain new Social Security numbers.
- November 16, 1998 SSA launched a new pilot project allowing people to apply for retirement or survivors benefits through SSA's 800 number telephone service.
- November 16, 1998 SSA mailed the 50 millionth Personal Earnings and Benefit Estimate Statement (PEBES) since it began issuing them.

- December 3-4, 1998 SSA, in conjunction with Howard University, held a two-day symposium in Washington, D.C. on the SSI program, focusing on future demographic trends and their effects on the program.
- December 8-9, 1998 The first ever White House Conference on Social Security was held in Washington, D.C.
- December 28, 1998 President Clinton announced that SSA's computer systems were fully Y2K compliant.

1999

- January 1999 The percentage of beneficiaries receiving their payments by direct deposit hit 75 percent, with 15 States having rates over 80 percent.
- January 13, 1999 President Clinton announced a set of disability initiatives aimed at removing barriers for people with disabilities that want to return to work.
- January 19, 1999 In his State of the Union Address, President Clinton laid out his proposal to "Save Social Security First." He proposed transferring 62 percent of the unified budget surpluses to Social Security over the next 15 years; saving 15 percent of the surpluses to shore up Medicare; and investing 12 percent of the surpluses into new Universal Savings Accounts as additions to Social Security. He also called for repeal of the Retirement Earnings Test.
- February 1, 1999 SSA given an "A" rating in management performance by the Government Performance Project of the Maxwell School at Syracuse University (only Federal agency to receive an "A").
- February 12, 1999 Vice President Gore and Commissioner Apfel announced, at an event in Albany, N. Y., a proposal for the first increase in the substantial gainful activity (SGA) level since 1990. They proposed raising the SGA amount from \$500 a month to \$700 a month, reflecting the level of growth in average wages.
- March 3, 1999 The House of Representatives passed H.J. Res. 32, a Congressional resolution, by a vote of 416 to 1. This non-binding resolution put the House on record as supporting an initiative to strengthen and protect the Social Security program for the 21st century.
- March 11, 1999 SSA issued a comprehensive disability program management plan, *Social Security and Supplemental Security Income Disability Programs: Managing for Today Planning for Tomorrow*.

- April 12, 1999 The 1999 Trustees Report showed the date of the combined OASDI Trust Fund exhaustion as 2034, a gain of two years from last year.
- May 4-6, 1999 SSA held its 1999 National Anti-Fraud Conference in Baltimore. This conference was part of an increased emphasis on program integrity issues.
- May 5, 1999 The first 450 resettled refugees from Kosovo landed at McGuire Air Force base in New Jersey. Among those processing the new arrivals were SSA employees who were taking Social Security number applications and assessing them for potential future SSI applications.
- May 11, 1999 The Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Social Security Subcommittee notified SSA that its Fiscal Year 2000 Performance Plan ranks among the highest in government with a score of 84.5 out of a possible 100.
- May 20-21, 1999 SSA's Retirement Research Consortium held its first annual Conference in Washington, D.C. to report on the initial set of research findings under this project.
- May 24, 1999 An unanimous Supreme Court ruled, in the case of Cleveland v. Policy Management Systems, that the provisions of the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA) and the requirements for Social Security disability benefits are not incompatible, and that filing a disability claim does not bar a person from seeking relief under ADA provisions. This ruling was consistent with the position SSA and the Administration had taken on the issue.
- May 28, 1999 SSA released its third *Annual Report of the Supplemental Security Income Program*. In January 1999, 6.3 million individuals received monthly Federal SSI payments averaging \$341. Federal expenditures for cash payments under the SSI program during calendar 1998 totaled \$27.7 billion, and the cost of administering the SSI program in FY 1998 was \$2.3 billion.
- June 7, 1999 The White House Conference on Mental Health was held. President Clinton directed OPM to achieve mental health and substance abuse parity in the FEHB Program for contract year 2001. The Clinton/Gore Administration announced a historic 5-year \$10 million Affective Disorder Demonstration Project at the SSA to help people with mental illnesses return to work. Vice President Gore announced SSA would offer up to 1,000 Social Security Disability beneficiaries with affective disorders the opportunity to participate in the project to test improved treatments that could result in better functioning and a return to the workforce.

- June 15, 1999 The Americans Discuss Social Security project of the Pew Charitable Trust gave its Final Report to Commissioner Apfel.
- June 28, 1999 SSA Hammer Award Ceremony for 11 teams or projects.
- July 19, 1999 SSA completed Phase I of its Intelligent Workstation/Local Area Network (IWS/LAN) computer modernization effort. This project, one of the largest information technology projects ever undertaken by the federal government, placed more than 75,000 workstations and 1,742 LANs in SSA and State DDS facilities around the country.
- July 26, 1999 Commissioner Apfel announced in "SSA News Bytes" that the Office of Communications had received two Emmy Awards from the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences for the public service ad—The Future of Social Security.
- July 29, 1999 President Clinton nominated James G. Huse, Jr. to be the Inspector General at SSA.
- August 5, 1999 SSA released its Hearing Process Improvement Plan to improve the hearing process, with a specific objective of reducing processing times from a projected level of 313 days in FY 1999, to less than 200 days in FY 2002.
- September 30, 1999 Commissioner Apfel announced that the University of Illinois at Urbana – Champaign was selected to participate in the Social Security Administration's Disability Research Institute. The Five-year program will provide \$1.25 million in funding to the university in the first year.
- September 30, 1999 SSA awarded a contract to begin development of an Electronic Death Registration process. The goal is to develop systems that will allow the States to transmit death reports to SSA electronically.
- October 1999 The automatic cost-of-living (COLA) for benefits for December 1999 (paid in January 2000) was 2.4 percent. The 2000 COLA will be 3.5 percent.
- October 1999 Martha Keys was appointed by the House to serve on the Social Security Advisory Board. Her term is from October 1999 to September 2005. This is Ms. Keys second term.
- October 1999 SSA received Hammer Award for the "Atlanta One-Stop."
- October 1, 1999 President Clinton nominated William A. Halter of Arkansas to be the Deputy Commissioner at SSA.

- October 1, 1999 SSA began mailing 125 million Social Security Statements to all workers 25 years of age or older. Statements will now be sent on an annual basis.
- October 8, 1999 The Federal Record Service Corporation (FRSC) agreed in a court settlement to cease its activities and to pay substantial financial penalties. FRSC had been charging the public for the same Social Security card services SSA provides for free.
- October 20, 1999 As part of President Clinton's Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities, SSA and the Small Business Administration signed a partnership agreement to help adults with disabilities find gainful employment or become entrepreneurs. Vice President Al Gore witnessed the signing ceremony in the Indian Treaty Room of the Old Executive Office Building.
- November 10, 1999 The Senate, by unanimous consent, confirmed the appointments of William A. Halter to be Deputy Commissioner of Social Security for the term expiring January 19, 2001 and James G. Huse, Jr. to be Inspector General of the Social Security Administration.
- November 15, 1999 SSA released its *Report on Initiatives to Improve National 800 Number and Program Service Center Service to the Public*.
- November 18, 1999 SSA hosted its first Electronic Service Conference and Exposition at SSA headquarters in Baltimore.
- November 22, 1999 William A. Halter was sworn in as Deputy Commissioner of Social Security.
- November 22, 1999 James G. Huse, Jr., was sworn in as Inspector General of Social Security.
- December 13, 1999 The University of Michigan announced that the Social Security Administration received a score of 82 in the latest American Customer Satisfaction Index Survey (ACSI). This score is one of the highest earned by participating Federal government agencies and 10 points higher than the comparable private sector index.
- December 14, 1999 President Clinton signed the *Foster Care Independence Act of 1999* (P.L. 106-169).
- December 17, 1999 President Clinton signed the *Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999* (P.L. 106-170). The legislation is the most significant change in disability policy since passage of the *Americans with Disabilities Act* in 1990. The signing ceremony took place at the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial in Washington, D.C.

2000

- February 2000 SSA's Internet service, SSA Online, reached the rank of #10 on the list of most frequently visited federal government Web sites.
- February 15, 2000 SSA launched its Electronic Newsletter (eNews) through which visitors are able to subscribe to Social Security enews, a monthly electronic newsletter providing brief items on the latest Social Security information of public interest.
- February 16, 2000 SSA signed International Totalization Agreement with Chile, the first such agreement with a South American country.
- March 13, 2000 SSA signed International Totalization Agreement with Korea, the first such agreement with an Asian country.
- March 14, 2000 SSA posted on its Web site the new Appeals Council Process Improvement Action Plan, an outline of short-term initiatives to improve processing of the Appeals Council review of hearing decisions.
- March 14, 2000 Results from SSA's annual customer satisfaction survey showed significant improvement in ratings for Fiscal Year (FY) 1999 from FY 1998. Overall satisfaction with SSA's service rose to 88 percent, up from 82 percent in FY 1998. Also, 44 percent of the respondents rated service "excellent," up from 30 percent last year.
- March 14-16, 2000 SSA sponsored the National American Indian – Alaska Native Conference in Denver, Colorado.
- March 30, 2000 The 2000 Trustees Report showed the date of the combined OASDI Trust Fund exhaustion as 2037, a gain of three years from last year.
- April 2000 SSA issued its FY 2001 Government Performance and Results Act Annual Performance Plan and Revised Final FY 2000 Performance Plan.
- April 6, 2000 Commissioner Apfel, and AFGE President Bobby Harnage, signed a new four-year collective bargaining contract.
- April 7, 2000 President Clinton signed the *Senior Citizens' Freedom to Work Act of 2000* (P.L. 106-182) at a White House Ceremony. The Act eliminated the Retirement Earnings Test for beneficiaries at or above Normal Retirement Age.

- April 7, 2000 SSA launched its electronic Retirement Planner as part of its Internet services. The Planner was announced by President Clinton at the signing ceremony for the repeal of the retirement earnings test included in the *Senior Citizens' Freedom to Work Act of 2000*.
- May 19, 2000 SSA's Office of Communications issued its Communications Report on strategies to improve the effectiveness of SSA's efforts to educate the public about the Social Security program.
- May 30, 2000 SSA released its fourth *Annual Report of the Supplemental Security Income Program*. In January 2000, 6.3 million individuals received monthly Federal SSI payments averaging \$350. Federal expenditures for cash payments under the SSI program during calendar 1999 totaled \$27.7 billion, and the cost of administering the SSI program in FY 1999 was \$2.5 billion.
- June 2000 SSA was successful in obtaining \$35 million in supplemental funding to upgrade personal computers for Agency employees.
- June 13, 2000 SSA announced it is partnering with Commerce Net, a nonprofit consortium, to test a variety of Internet technologies to determine if they can be used by the agency to enhance customer service.
- June 15, 2000 SSA held Hammer Award Ceremony for six SSA special teams.
- July 2000 SSA received the Pioneer Award for Access American for Seniors from the E-gov 2000 Selection Committee.
- July 11, 2000 SSA launched a new interactive application on its Internet site allowing Medicare beneficiaries to apply for a replacement Medicare card online.
- July 24, 2000 Formal swearing in and first meeting of the President's Work Incentives Advisory Panel.
- July 26, 2000 President Clinton announced three new regulatory proposals to: (1) raise the SGA level automatically each year based on increases in the national average wage index; (2) increase the Trial Work Period amount from \$200 to \$530 a month and provide automatic yearly increases; (3) allow disabled students receiving SSI to exclude more income before their benefits are affected (more than triple the current amount). The changes were announced at a ceremony commemorating the 10th Anniversary of the signing of the *Americans with Disabilities Act*.
- August 4, 2000 President Clinton released a special statement in acknowledgement of the 65th anniversary of the Social Security Act.

- August 5, 2000 SSA, in partnership with the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Presidential Library in Hyde Park, New York, hosted a special commemorative program in honor of the 65th anniversary of the signing of the Social Security Act at the FDR Library grounds.
- August 14, 2000 Commissioner Apfel dedicated a 65th Anniversary Garden on the grounds of SSA headquarters in Baltimore.
- August 31, 2000 Based on data from the Bureau of the Public Debt, the invested assets of the combined OASI and DI Trust Funds topped \$1 trillion.
- September 2000 Agency launches SSA's Mandate Against Red-Tape (SMART) initiative, in accordance with President Clinton's April 21, 1998 memorandum on Streamlining the Granting of Waivers.
- September 7, 2000 Commissioner Apfel announced the release of SSA's *2010 Vision* document, charting the strategic changes ahead for SSA in the next decade.
- September 14, 2000 SSA launched its year 2000 "Computers for Kids" campaign by donating 6,000 computers to Baltimore, MD city schools. The Commissioner announced that SSA would donate over 30,000 computers and equipment to public schools and educationally-related non-profit institutions nationwide during the next five months in conjunction with President Clinton's Digital Divide Initiative.
- September 22, 2000 The Government Executive Magazine awarded SSA's Inmate Project the 2000 Government Technology Leadership Award for automating the receipt and processing of inmate reports.
- October 2000 Gerald M. Shea, who was nominated by President Clinton, was confirmed by the Senate to serve on the Social Security Advisory Board. His term is from October 2000 to September 2004. Mr. Shea previously served a recess appointment on the Board.
- October 2000 Mark A. Weinberger, who was nominated by President Clinton, was confirmed by the Senate to serve on the Social Security Advisory Board. His term is from October 2000 to September 2006.
- October 2000 David Podoff was appointed by the Senate to serve on the Social Security Advisory Board. His term is from October 2000 to September 2006. He replaced Lori Hansen on the Board.
- October 3, 2000 Commissioner Apfel announced that when his term expires in January 2001 he would leave government to take a position with the LBJ School of

Public Affairs at the University of Texas in Austin. Commissioner Apfel will hold the Sid Richardson Chair in Public Affairs, a position previously held by Wilbur Cohen, one of Social Security's most important pioneers.

- October 12, 2000 SSA announced that its expanded online Benefits Planner now includes information on disability and survivors' benefits, as well as retirement benefits.
- October 25, 2000 President Clinton announced that SSA is awarding \$8 million in grants to 43 non-profit organizations and/or state agencies in 26 states and two territories to provide benefit planning, assistance and outreach for persons with disabilities who are attempting to return to work. These grants are part of The Ticket to Work initiative.
- October 28, 2000 President Clinton signed the *Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000* (P.L. 106-386).
- October 28, 2000 Dr. John L. Palmer and Dr. Thomas R. Saving, who were nominated by President Clinton, were confirmed by the Senate to serve four-year terms as Public Trustee of the Old Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance trust funds. Their terms began on October 28, 2000.
- November 2, 2000 SSA Deputy Commissioner Halter announced the availability of SSA's new online application process for Social Security retirement claims. He also announced that SSA's 800-number telephone system would now take immediate retirement claims.
- November 30, 2000 Commissioner Apfel announced that SSA has received the *Certificate of Excellence in Accountability Reporting* for its FY 1999 Accountability Report.