



Social Security Number Integrity and Protection

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Presentation Topics

- General Enumeration Background
- Office of the Inspector General's (OIG) Focus on Social Security number (SSN) Integrity
- Earnings Suspense File
- Moral of the Story...



General Enumeration Background

- As of January 2010, the Social Security Administration (SSA) has issued over 420 million SSNs.
- In FY 2009, SSA processed approximately 18 million original and replacement SSN cards.



Intent of the SSN and Its Use Today

- SSN created in 1936 to track workers' earnings and eligibility for Social Security benefits.
- Over the years, SSNs have become our de-facto national identifier.
- SSNs are valuable as illegal commodities.
- Identity theft is the fastest growing white-collar crime.



SSA's Controls over Assigning SSNs

- Over the last decade, SSA has implemented numerous improvements in its SSN assignment process.
- SSA's improved procedures have reduced its risk of improperly assigning SSNs.
- SSA has few mechanisms to curb unnecessary SSN collection and use.



OIG's Focus on SSN Integrity

- Our auditors have issued numerous reports to protect SSNs
 - Enumeration Controls and Programs
 - Immigration Issues and SSNs
 - SSN Collection and Use by External Entities



Enumeration Controls and Programs

- Enumeration Audits
 - *Assessment of the Enumeration at Entry Process*
 - *The Enumeration at Birth Program*
 - *Controls for Issuing Social Security Number Verification Printouts*
 - *Field Office Use of the SS-5 Assistant*
 - *Congressional Response Report: Accuracy of the Social Security Administration's Numident File*



Immigration Issues and SSNs

- The “Alphabet” Audits
 - *Assignment of Social Security Numbers to Noncitizens with Fiancé (K-1) Visas*
 - *Management Advisory Report: R-1 Religious Workers’ Use of Social Security Numbers*
 - *Assessment of F-1 Students’ Use of Social Security Numbers*
 - *Assignment of Social Security Numbers to J-1 Exchange Visitors*



SSN Collection and Use by External Entities

- SSN Collection and Use Audits
 - *Hospitals' Use and Protection of Social Security Numbers*
 - *Removing Social Security Numbers from Medicare Cards*
 - *Universities' Use of Social Security Numbers as Student Identifiers*
 - *K-12 Schools' Use and Protection of Social Security Numbers*
 - *State and Local Governments' Collections and Use of Social Security Numbers*
 - *Prisoners' Access to Social Security Numbers*



Office of Investigations (OI) Efforts to Address SSN Misuse

- OI's Role
 - Examines and investigates allegations of fraud, waste, abuse and mismanagement in SSA program and operations
 - Work in areas of enumeration fraud and SSN misuse ensuring the reliability of SSA programs and their future operations
- Recent SSN Misuse Cases
 - Boston Resident Uses Identity of Incarcerated Recipient
 - Man Sentenced on Federal Student Loan Fraud and Social Security number Misuse

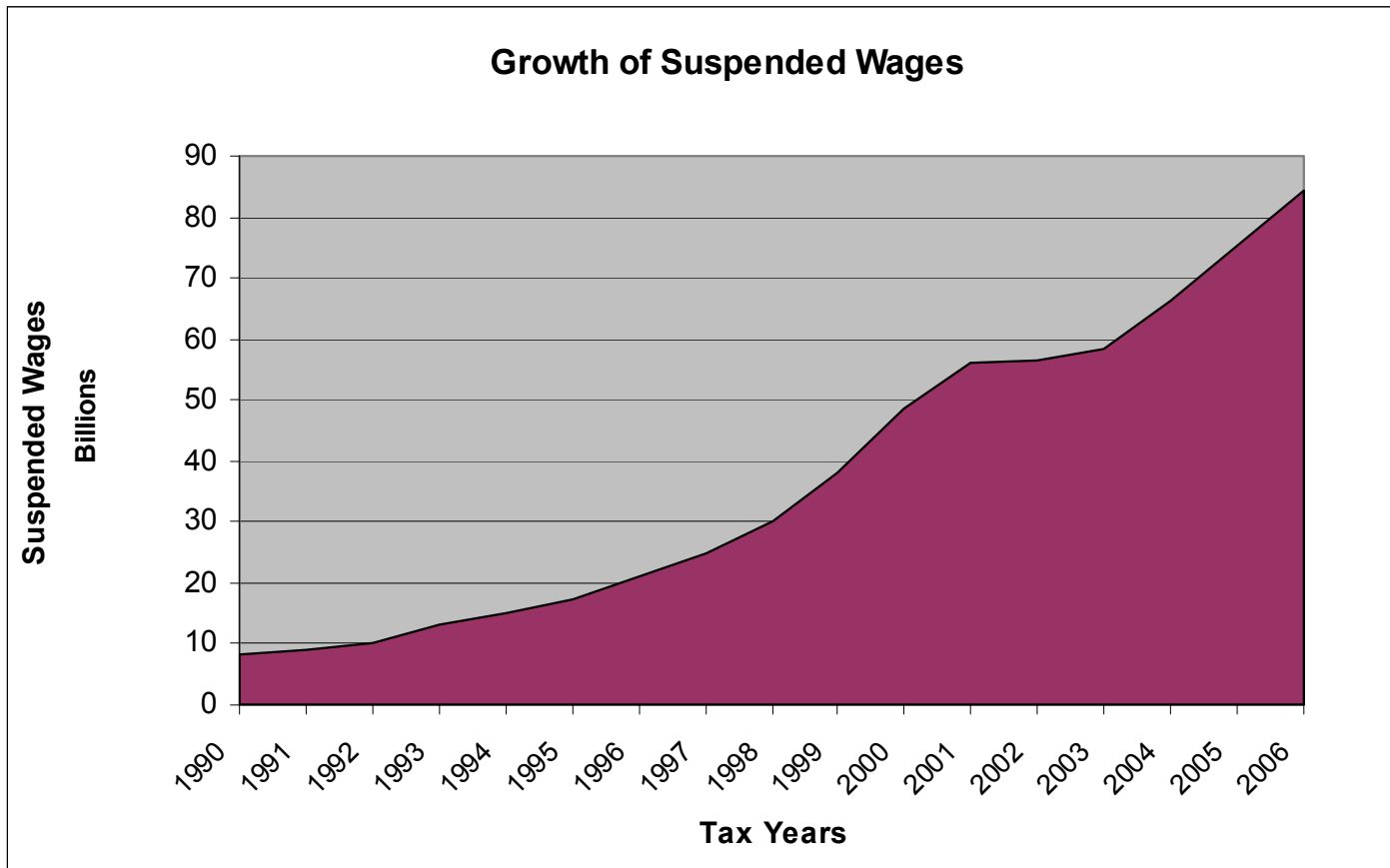


Earnings Suspense File

- Unmatched wages go into Social Security's Earnings Suspense File (ESF)
- The ESF now contains 285 million wage items and \$745 billion in wages
- Unidentified wages can impact disability and retirement benefits
- Correlation between ESF and illegal employment



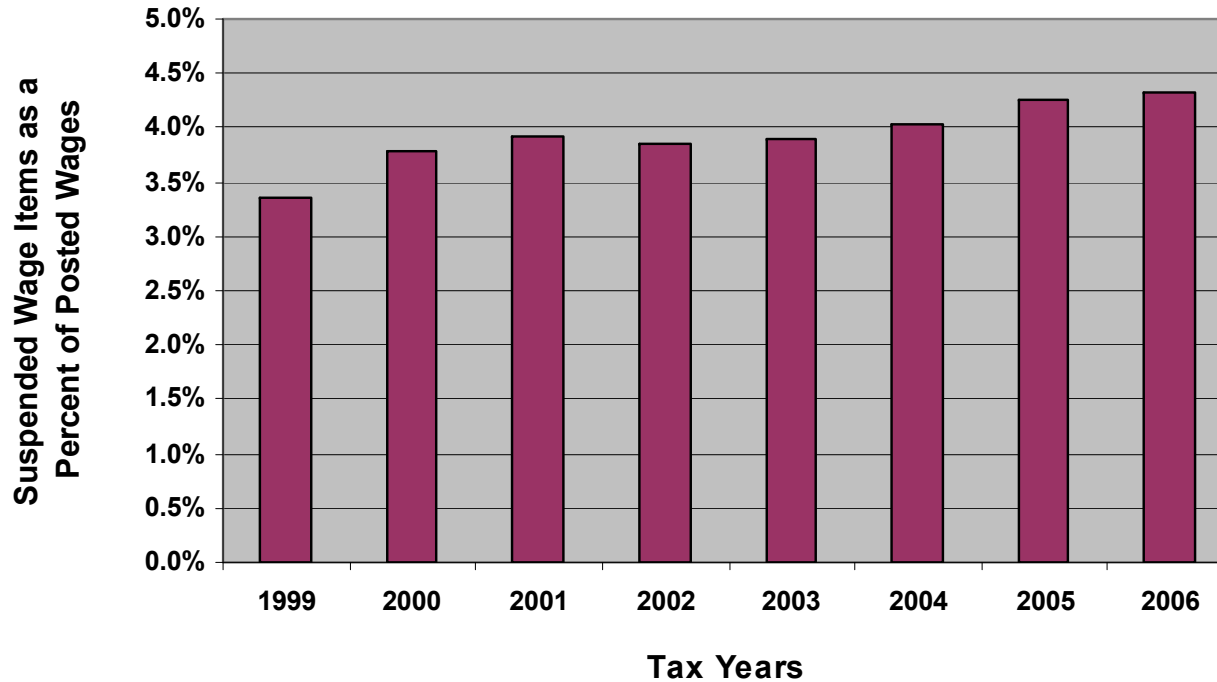
Earnings Suspense File





Earnings Suspense File

**Percent of Suspended Wages Items Compared to
Total Reported Wages Items
(Tax Years 1999 to 2006)**





Earnings Suspense File

- SSA's efforts to reduce the size and growth of the ESF
 - ✓ Sending correspondence to Employers
 - ✓ SSN verification services for Employers and Others (SSNVS, E-Verify, CBSV)
- Limitation of reducing size of ESF without new legislation, especially immigration reform



No easy answer...

- Many proposals have been introduced over the years.
 - Biometrics
 - National Identification cards
 - Mandatory employee verifications
- But, these are all politically sensitive.



So, what's the moral of the story?

- Take charge of your SSN...
(and your children's)
- Keep your SSN and SSN card safe
 - Do **NOT** routinely carry your card
- Avoid providing your number to anyone without a legal reason to have it



What if an identity thief is creating problems for you?

- You should contact the Federal Trade Commission at www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsite/idtheft.
Or, you can call 1-877-IDTHEFT (1-877-438-4338).
- Check your credit AND your annual earnings statement from SSA.
 - Free credit reports are available online at www.annualcreditreport.com.
 - You can get a statement at any time by requesting one online at www.ssa.gov/mystatement/.
Or, by calling our 800 number (1-800-772-1213).