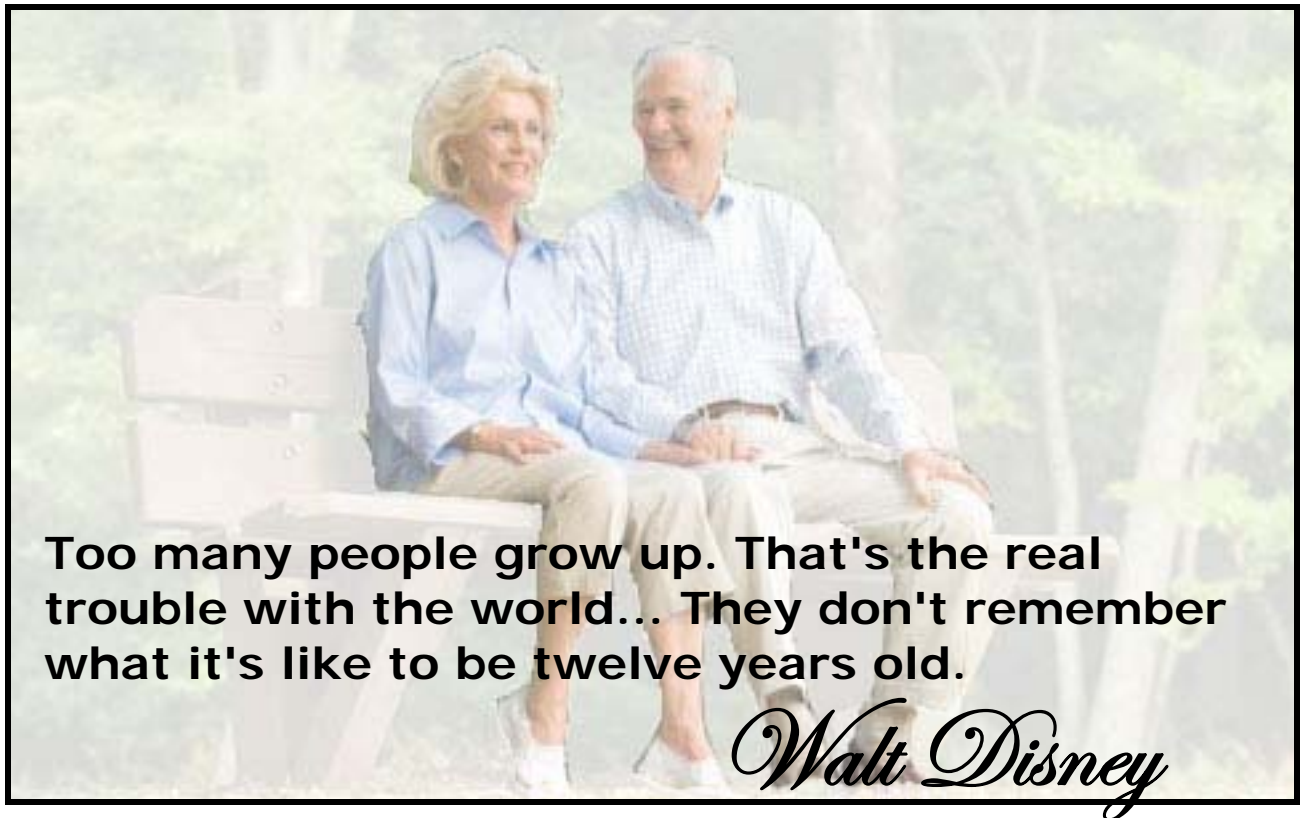




Presents

# A Helpful Common Sense Retirement Preparation Guide

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# Federal Retirement Guide

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Preparing for Retirement

# Federal Retirement Guide

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Published by:



**Betty Stephenson Sanders**

Federal Retirement Guide  
Preparing for Retirement

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# Forward

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After nearly forty years of work a guy gets tired! The American dream is work, work, work, work, work, work, work, work, work and then retire. Oh I forgot, got an education and continued to import and enhance my marketable skills. I'm still 12 years from retirement and looking forward to engaging in the childish behaviors of my youth, I want to dig a hole to China, build a tree house.

I want to have fun!

This guide is just a guide. For those of you that are preparing to enjoy retirement, let's take a moment to ensure you do it.

Too many books, guides, pamphlets, software, seminars, training classes, and locker room talk exist on the hundreds of ideas how to retire successfully. The final step is not the place to make a mistake, or fail to make the proper choices for you.

The following pages outline the needed steps to ensure that you connect with the proper organizations and can find the forms and web sites needed to properly complete needed documentation.

The National Association For Employee Benefits stands ready to assist in the education and advice on forms and completion of them. In the days of telephone retirement briefings, completing the retirement paperwork to then mail or fax it to personnel, employees need face-to face help more than ever.

Good luck and happy reading.

John Sanders  
Director  
National Association For Employee Benefits

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# The Legal Stuff!

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# Are You On The Right Track Financially?

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If you are getting close to retirement, or if you have several years to go, this is the place to discover what a review of all of your accounts will do to ensure that you are on the right track. A question to ask yourself: Am I on track?

A financial briefing, or benefits review, is the first place to start. We can give you choices and show you how your TSP account can be put towards the best value. The sooner your plan is known the, sooner you can do something about it.

A personalized review of your accounts with a one-on-one confidential meeting will help to ensure your retirement goals. No two individuals will ever have the exact needs because of possible circumstances: children still at home, in college, home mortgage payments, taking care of parents, house repairs, and a gambit of many other situations are all different.

The best way to get started is to complete our free worksheet. This will help you and a professional planner review your situation.

This website is dedicated to federal employees and their families, to educate and pre-plan to determine the most meaningful way our website and facilities can assist you.

## Being Prepared!

We have good news! We have the ability now to make significant decisions in our lives, before we leave the work force behind, or to make some serious changes in the next few years. Let's look at some important issues facing our future.

- When can I retire?
- Have I have recently updated my will, estate, and beneficiaries?
- How will my life change after retirement?
- Do I have enough money to live on when I retire?
- Will I need my FEGLI coverage?
- What can I do before I retire to reach my retirement goals?

Having a plan is the best way to succeed. Retirement is coming. Sooner for sonn, later for others. When can I retire? Age is not the determining factor for retirement, it is the money. If you have taken the time to fill out the worksheets, then you may have several options.

Most federal employees will obtain an annuity estimate prior to retiring. They will get a sense of what they need to live on after leaving the government job. It would be to your advantage to evaluate your expenses and income pre-work and post-work so that you and your spouse will know how much you will have at retirement to live on. This assessment will help you analyze your personal situation and determine what you will have left after paying for the necessities of life. You

will be able to determine if your lifestyle will change dramatically or if you will have to work part-time to supplement your income.

FERS is a retirement plan that provides benefits from three different sources: a Basic Benefit Plan, Social Security, and the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). Two of the three parts of FERS (Social Security and the TSP) can go with you to your next job if you leave the Federal Government before retirement. This portability provides peace of mind for those of you who don't put all of your work years into a government job.

The Basic Benefit and Social Security parts of FERS require you to pay your share each pay period. Your agency withholds the cost of the Basic Benefit and Social Security from your pay as payroll deductions. Your agency pays its part too. Then, after you retire, you receive annuity payments each month for the rest of your life.

Thrift Savings Plan component is an account that your agency automatically sets up for you. Each pay period your agency deposits into your account amount equal to 1 percent of the basic pay you earn for the pay period. You can also make your own contributions to your TSP account and your agency will make a matching contribution. These contributions are tax-deferred. The Thrift Savings Plan is administered by the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board.

Retirement eligibility is determined by your age and the number of years of creditable service and some cases, you must have reached the Minimum Retirement Age (MRA) to receive retirement benefits.

## **Thrift Savings Plan**

The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) is another retirement savings and investment plan for federal employees. Designed to provide retirement income, the TSP offers federal employees the same type of savings and tax benefits that many private corporations offer their employees under their 401(k) plans.

Within the civilian component of the TSP, federal employees covered by the Federal Employees' Retirement System (FERS) and the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) can contribute to TSP. (The participation rules are different for FERS and CSRS employees.)

Participating in the TSP does not effect the amount of your Social Security benefits nor your FERS Basic Annuity. The money that you earn and save through your TSP account will provide retirement income, and is particularly important to FERS employees because the formula used to compute your FERS Basic Annuity is less generous than the formula used to compute the CSRS.

Here are two important points about the TSP:

- As a FERS employee, you may elect to contribute any dollar amount or percentage (1 to 100) of your basic pay to the Thrift Savings Plan.
- FERS employees annual dollar total cannot exceed \$16,500 for 2010 (unless over the age of 50).

Once you are eligible as a FERS employee, you are entitled to receive agency contributions. Your agency makes two different types of contributions to your TSP account as part of your FERS benefits. These contributions are not taken out of your pay, nor do they increase your pay for income tax or Social Security purposes. There are two different types of contributions. Here are the details on each:

**Automatic 1% Contributions** When you become eligible for agency contributions, your agency will automatically contribute to your TSP account an amount equal to 1 percent of your basic pay each pay period. These are your agency automatic (1%) Contributions. You will receive these contributions whether or not you contribute your own money to your TSP account.

**Matching Contributions** If you are contributing to your TSP account, your agency will also make matching contributions once you are eligible for them. If you do not contribute your own money, you will not receive these agency-matching contributions. Matching contributions apply to the first five percent of pay that you contribute each pay period. Your contributions are matched dollar-for-dollar on the first three percent of pay you contribute each pay period and 50 cents on the dollar for the next two percent of pay. Your agency will not match the contributions that you make above five percent of your pay. However, you will still benefit from before-tax savings and tax-deferred earnings on those contributions. The fact that your agency adds to your contributions will make your TSP account grow faster. Your Agency Automatic (1%) and Matching Contributions can add up to five percent of your basic pay.

## **Annuities**

Annuities are confusing for most investors, which is why we've devoted a section to helping you better understand them, and the role they play in your retirement package. A Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) annuity provides monthly payments for as long as you are alive. If you elect an annuity with survivor benefits, it will provide payments as long as you (or your joint annuitant) are alive.

A TSP annuity is one of your options for withdrawing your TSP account after you separate from federal service. If you want a guaranteed stream of payments for as long as you (or your joint annuitant) are alive, an annuity may be the right choice. You can use your entire account balance to purchase a TSP annuity, or you can use a portion of your account balance to purchase an annuity and choose a different withdrawal option or options to withdraw the rest.

The factors that affect the amount of your monthly annuity payments include:

- The annuity option you choose
- Your age when your annuity is purchased (and the age of your spouse or other joint annuitant if you choose a joint annuity)
- The amount used to purchase your annuity

- The interest rate index when your annuity is purchased

If you choose a TSP annuity, the balance in the account to which your annuity request applies must be at least \$3,500 at the time your annuity is purchased. If you are using only a portion of your account for an annuity, the percentage you choose when requesting your withdrawal must equal \$3,500 or more of your vested account balance.

As a CSRS or FERS federal employee, you can invest any portion of your account in any of the Thrift Savings Plan investment funds.

You can allocate any whole percentage of your future contributions (including loan payments and transfers from traditional IRAs or eligible employer plans) to any of the TSP investment funds by making a contribution allocation.

Of the funds you can choose from, five are individual funds (one comprising government bonds and the other four tracking specific market indices) while the other five are "Lifecycle Funds" designed to professionally change the allocation mix of investments among the individual funds during various stages of the employee's federal service. All TSP funds are trust funds that are regulated by the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (and not the Securities and Exchange Commission).

Here's a quick breakdown of each option:

**G Fund** Government fund. These are special government safeguarded funds backed by the securities of the US Government.

**F Fund** Bond Index fund. Federally sponsored notes and bonds of U.S. Treasury.

**C fund** Common Stock Index fund. Follows the S&P 500.

**S Fund** Small Capitalization Stock Index fund. Invested in small businesses. Follows the Wilshire 4500.

**I Fund** International Stock Index fund. Invested in 21 different countries' stock markets.

**L Fund** also known as the Lifecycle Funds – allows for automatic reallocation of assets from more risky stock funds (the C, I, and S Funds) into less risky income funds (the F and G Funds) as an employee reaches retirement age.

It's important to note that a TSP annuity is not the "basic annuity" that you will receive as a result of your retirement coverage under FERS or CSRS, or the retired pay that members of the uniformed services receive.

The TSP, through its annuity provider, offers the single life annuities (with level or increasing payments: joint life annuities with your spouse (with level or increasing payments)), and joint life annuities with someone other than your spouse (with level payments).

Here's a description of your annuity options:

- Single life annuity: An annuity that provides monthly payments only to you as long as you live.
- Joint life annuity: An annuity that provides monthly payments to you while you and the person with whom you choose to share your annuity (your joint annuitant) are alive. (In most cases, the joint annuitant is the participant's spouse.) When you or your joint annuitant dies, monthly annuity payments will be made to the survivor for his or her lifetime. The amount of the payment while you and your joint annuitant are alive and the amount of the payment to the survivor depend on whether you choose a 100 percent or a 50 percent survivor annuity. (Note that if you choose an annuity that provides for a joint annuitant other than your spouse, the joint annuitant must be either a former spouse or someone with an insurable interest in you. This means that the person is financially dependent on you and could reasonably expect to derive financial benefit from your continued life.)
- 100 percent survivor annuity: The amount of the monthly annuity payment to the survivor is the same as the annuity payment made while both you and your joint annuitant are alive. However, the amount of the monthly payment that you receive while you are both alive is generally less than it would be if you had selected the 50 percent survivor annuity.
- 50 percent survivor annuity: The amount of the monthly annuity payment to the survivor -- whether the survivor is you or your joint annuitant -- is cut in half (that is, cut to 50 percent) of the annuity payment made while both you and your joint annuitant are alive. If you name a joint annuitant who is more than 10 years younger than you, you must choose a joint life annuity with the 50 percent survivor benefit. The only exception is for a former spouse to whom all or a portion of your TSP account is payable under a retirement benefits court order.

Once you have chosen either a single life or a joint life annuity, you must decide whether you want to receive level or increasing payments.

Level payments. The amount of the monthly annuity payment remains the same from year to year. You receive the same monthly payment for as long as you live with. A joint life annuity, you receive the same monthly payment for as long as you and your joint annuitant are alive. The monthly payment to the survivor will depend on whether you have chosen a 100 percent survivor annuity or a 50 percent survivor annuity, but it will remain at the same level for the life of the survivor.

There are two additional annuity features available: “The cash refund” attributes, and the “10-year certain” feature. Under certain circumstances, these features will provide payments to your named beneficiary. (If you choose one of these features, your monthly payments will be less than they would have been if you had chosen an annuity without either feature).

Here are descriptions of these special annuity features:

- Cash Fefund. If you (and your joint annuitant, if applicable) die before the amount used to purchase your annuity has been paid out, the remaining amount will be paid to your beneficiary in a lump sum. This feature can be combined with either a single life or a joint life annuity, and with level or increasing payments.
- Ten-year certain. If you die before receiving annuity payments for a 10-year period,

payments will continue to your beneficiary for the rest of the 10-year period. If you live beyond the 10-year period, you will continue to receive payments, but no payments will be made to a beneficiary when you die. This feature can be combined with a single life annuity with either level or increasing payments. It cannot be combined with a joint life annuity.

When you're reviewing your annuity options, it's important that you understand that the value of the total expected payments under all of the annuity options is comparable, but the amounts of each monthly payment that you receive -- and the provision for continuing payments to a survivor or beneficiary -- are different.

For example, a monthly annuity payment under a single life annuity will generally be more than the monthly payment under a joint life annuity. However, there will generally be fewer payments under a single life annuity than under a joint life annuity. This is because payments continue under the joint life annuity after the death of one of the joint annuitants until the survivor dies.

To estimate annuity payments, you must first estimate your TSP account balance at the expected annuity purchase date. You can do so by using the "Projecting Your Account Balance" calculator on the TSP website as well as answer other TSP related questions at [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov).

## **Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI)**

The Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) Program covers 4 million federal employees, include the retirees, and many family members. This is notably a far-reaching benefit for all workers who want the peace of mind in knowing that their dependents, spouses and affairs will be taken care of upon their passing.

FEGLI's group term life insurance comprises Basic Life insurance coverage and three types of optional insurance.

- **Basic:** In most cases, when you were a new employee you were automatically covered by Basic life insurance and your payroll office deducted premiums from your paycheck unless you waived the coverage.
- **Extra Benefit:** The amount of basic life insurance available to each eligible employee under age 45 was increased commencing with the first pay period beginning on or after October 1, 1981, at no additional cost to the employee. The increase is graduated according to the employee's age.

Employees under age 36 are eligible for Basic Insurance coverage in an amount equal to their annual salary rounded to the next higher thousand dollars, plus \$2,000, multiplied by two. For employees in this under-36 category, a worker's FEGLI premium cost remains the same. Beginning at age 36, the multiplication factor for the amount of Basic Insurance will decline

by 0.1 each year, until it reaches 1.0 for employees age 45 and over. For example, if the employee's age is 34, then the appropriate factor is 2.0.

- Optional: There are three types of optional insurance. You must have Basic Insurance in order to elect any of the options. Unlike basic, enrollment in optional insurance is not automatic; you must take action to elect the options. If you didn't elect optional coverage as a new employee, your opportunities to do so later are limited: during an open season, by providing medical information, or by experiencing a life event, or deployment. There are three types of optional insurance:
  - Option A - (Standard Optional Insurance) Federal employees covered under the Basic life insurance program have the option of purchasing an additional \$10,000 worth of FEGLI life insurance. The employee pays the full cost of this standard optional insurance coverage. The amount of the premium depends on the employee's age and is withheld from the worker's salary.
  - AD&D - For covered employees (not retirees), selection of the Option A life insurance coverage also results in an equal amount of accidental death and dismemberment protection. Retirees who reach age 65 no longer have to pay premiums, but the \$10,000 optional insurance starts to decline at this point at the rate of two percent for each full calendar month until it reaches \$2,500, or one-fourth of the face value.
  - Option B - (Additional Optional Insurance) Federal employees who are insured for the Basic coverage may elect "additional optional insurance" in an amount equal to one, two, three, four, or five times their actual rate of annual basic pay (rounded to the next \$1,000). The employee pays the full cost of the additional optional insurance. The premium depends on the employee's age and is withheld from salary. Accidental death and dismemberment coverage is not included in this coverage. Retirees at age 65 no longer have to pay premiums for additional optional insurance, but the amount of their coverage starts to decrease at this point at the rate of two percent each month for 50 months, at which point coverage ceases. However, a retiree may elect to keep the full amount of the additional optional insurance in force and continue to pay the full premium. Such an election may be cancelled at a later date.
  - Option C - (Family Optional Insurance) Federal employees insured for the Basic Insurance coverage may elect family optional insurance to cover eligible family members. Eligible family members are an employee's spouse and unmarried dependent children under age 22. The coverage amount is an amount equal to up to five multiples of \$5,000 for a spouse and up to five multiples of \$2,500 for each eligible child. The employee pays the full cost of the family optional insurance. The premium depends on the employee's age and is withheld from the worker's salary. Accidental death and dismemberment coverage is not included in this coverage. Retirees at age 65 no longer have to pay premiums for family optional insurance, but their coverage amount starts to decrease at this point at the rate of two percent each month for 50 months, at which point coverage ceases. However, a retiree may elect to keep the full amount of the family optional insurance in force and continue to pay the full premium. Such an election may be cancelled at a later date.

The Federal Government pays one-third of the cost of Basic Insurance, and the employee shares costs \$0.15 cents per \$1,000 worth of coverage. Basic Insurance is free for Postal employees.

Your age does not affect the cost of Basic Insurance, and there is no extra cost for the Extra Benefit for those under age 45. There is no extra cost for Accidental Death and Dismemberment (AD&D) coverage. The premium for Basic Insurance does not change on a regular basis. The OPM reviews the premiums periodically and will announce premium changes prior to their effective date. Premium changes are published in a Federal Register notice and are also sent to agencies and retirement systems. The premiums are also updated on the FEGLI website.

As a federal employee, you pay 100 percent of the cost of optional insurance. The premiums for the three optional insurance coverage is based on your age and on the number of Option B and/or Option C multiples (up to five) that you elect. Unlike other insurance options available to you as a federal employee, you do not choose from a selection of plans in the FEGLI program, as there is only one such program. You can, however, choose the amount and types of life insurance coverage you wish to have.

The amount of basic life insurance provided under FEGLI begins to decrease once an individual retires or reaches age 65, whichever comes later. The rate of decrease is two percent per month, until 25 percent of the amount you had at time of retirement is reached. The time for this to decrease is 38 months. However, FEGLI-covered employees are given an opportunity at the time of retirement to elect either a lower rate of reduction or no coverage reduction after attaining age 65 in exchange for their agreement to make additional premium payments. Accidental death and dismemberment coverage is not available to retirees.

To enroll in the FEGLI program, complete form SF 2817, "Life Insurance Election," and submit it to your agency's personnel or Human Resources Office. (Some agencies allow electronic enrollment. Check with your Human Resources Office to see whether this is available to you).

Coverage for optional insurance is effective the first day you are in a pay and duty status after you submit the election to your Human Resources Office. It is important for you to check your Leave and Earnings Statement (pay stub) afterwards to see if your election has been processed. If you think you should have coverage but don't see it yet, contact your Human Resources Office.

With FEGLI, no individual policy is issued. Your copy of the SF 2817, "Life Insurance Election," and the FEGLI Program Booklet is your certificate of proof of insurance. In addition, you do not have to re-enroll every year. Your coverage continues automatically each year unless you change it.

For further information and common questions about your FEGLI visit the government website at [www.opm.gov/insure/new\\_employ/index.asp?ProgramId=4](http://www.opm.gov/insure/new_employ/index.asp?ProgramId=4).

## **Social Security Retirement Benefits**

As a general rule, early or late retirement will give you about the same total Social Security benefits over your lifetime. If you retire early, the monthly benefit amounts will be smaller to take into account the longer period you will receive them. If you retire late, you will get benefits for a shorter

period of time but the monthly amounts will be larger to make up for the months when you did not receive anything.

There are advantages and disadvantages to taking your Social Security benefits before your full retirement age. The advantage is that you collect benefits for a longer period of time. The disadvantage is your benefit is reduced. Each person's situation is different.

- If you were born on January 1st, you should refer to the previous year.
- You must be at least 62 for the entire month to receive benefits.
- Percentages are approximate due to rounding.

The maximum benefit for a spouse is 50% of the benefit the worker would receive at full retirement age. The percent reduction for the spouse should be applied after the automatic 50% reduction. Percentages are approximate due to rounding. Make sure you contact Social Security before your desired to retire.

Social Security offers an online retirement application that you can complete in as little as 15 minutes. It's so easy. Better yet, you can apply from the comfort of your home or office at a time most convenient for you. There's no need to drive to a local Social Security office or wait for an appointment with a Social Security representative.

In most cases, once your application is submitted electronically, you're done. There are no forms to sign and usually no documentation is required. Social Security will process your application and contact you if any further information is needed.

[www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov)

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## Estate Planning For Today

Don't leave the final disposition of your estate up to chance and the whims of bureaucrats. Estate planning doesn't have to be elaborate or complicated, just well thought out and put in writing. Learn how to create an estate plan and protect your family.

- An estate plan has several elements. An estate plan includes: a will; assignment of power of attorney; and a living will or health-care proxy (medical power of attorney). For some people, a trust may also make sense. When putting together a plan, you must be mindful of both federal and state laws governing estates.
- Everybody needs a will. No one likes to think about dying, but a will tells the world exactly how and to whom you want your property or money distributed. It's also the best place to name guardians for your children. Dying without a will -- also known as dying "intestate" -- can be costly to your heirs and leaves you no say over who gets your assets. Even if you

have a trust, you still need a will to take care of any holdings outside of that trust when you die.

- Taking inventory of your assets is a good place to start. Your assets include your investments, retirement savings, insurance policies, and real estate or business interests. Ask yourself three questions: Whom do you want to inherit your property? Whom do you want handling your financial affairs if you're ever incapacitated? Whom do you want making medical decisions for you if you become unable to make them for yourself?
- No matter your net worth, it's important to have a basic estate plan in place. Such a plan ensures that your family and financial goals are met after you die.
- Trusts aren't just for the wealthy. Trusts are legal mechanisms that let you put conditions on how and when your assets will be distributed upon your death. They also allow you to reduce your estate and gift taxes and to distribute assets to your heirs without the cost, delay and publicity of probate court.
- Discussing your estate plans with your heirs may prevent disputes or confusion.
- Inheritance can be a loaded issue. By being clear about your intentions, may help you dispel potential conflicts after you're gone. But, if everything is in writing it takes the guess work out of your heirs' confusion.
- The federal estate tax exemption - the amount you may leave to heirs free of federal tax -- changes regularly.
- The estate tax hit \$3.5 million in 2009, but was phased out completely in 2010, but only for a year. Unless Congress passes new laws between now and then, the tax will be reinstated in 2011 at \$1 million.
- You may leave an unlimited amount of money to your spouse tax-free, but this isn't always the best tactic.
- By leaving all your property and assets to your spouse, you won't use your estate tax exemption and instead increase your surviving spouse's taxable estate. That means your children are likely to pay more in estate taxes if your spouse leaves them the money when he or she dies. Plus, it defers the tough decisions about the distribution of your assets until your spouse's death. There are two easy ways to give gifts tax-free and reduce your estate.
- You may give up to \$13,000 a year to an individual (or \$26,000 if you're married and giving the gift with your spouse). You may also pay an unlimited amount of medical and education bills for someone if you pay the expenses directly to the institutions where they were incurred. There are ways to give charitable gifts that keep on giving.
- If you donate to a charitable gift fund or community foundation, such as your local church, your investment grows tax-free and you can select the charities to which contributions are given both before and after you die.

# Money Does Matter

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Today we live in an evolved society where our requirements are not met by hunting or attacking each other neither can we be self reliant for all our needs.

We are part of a social economic society which functions on certain principles of give and take. Our society has come a long way from the barter system to the current monetized system of trade.

We also belong to the highest form of evolution i.e. human being and a human society grows on the basis of relationships. When we enter into a relationship of our free will there is a shared love and warmth between the two people and a tacit acceptance of mutual responsibility towards each other. Out of this love and attraction springs a family. As people in our life grow, so does our responsibility. We know money cannot buy happiness but so also love cannot feed the stomach. A right balance of love and money is essential for survival and sublimation in this social economic set up.

When you take the vows of marriage you take the vow to protect and nurture your partner and the family. But one fine day in search of truth and enlightenment if you leave your dependents to fend for them selves. A man, who while living in the society, discharges his duties and enjoys his rights and still remains aware of the transient world is enlightened indeed! Though a family's emotional and spiritual needs are satisfied by love, the social security needs can be met by money and money alone.

There is a saying that money is not everything in life but it sure feels like it is! As it runs the many social and developmental areas of our lives.

But there is another aspect to it. Money is a very titillating object. The more money, the greater the comforts to the body and the better luxuries to excite the senses. So how much money is enough money? There is no limit to indulgence and mirth. In fact, the harder and smarter you work, the more you earn and the plenty you possess. And it is absolutely fine to live in affluence and abundance. According to Ecclesiastes, "Every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labor, it is the gift of God." It is a misconception that inner peace and wisdom comes through asceticism or seclusion.

Our life is a merger of body, mind, and soul. We are endowed with the senses to savor the beautiful physical world around us. Non-fulfillment of desire of any of the three elements of our existence is life incomplete. We would miss out half the story if we give up money because money enables to live the physical life and a better one at that. However, our folly lies in believing that the body is the only element to be gratified. Money only enriches one part of our existence, i.e. physical. It is not the be-all and end-all of our living.

We may certainly live a social and satin-clad life supporting and comforting ourselves and our loved ones. Yet, as we grow and willingly reach to satisfy our intellect and soul, the mysteries of life will be revealed on its own and the dilemmas and anxieties will come to rest. The body and its paraphernalia will on its own slide down the hierarchy of desires and fulfillment. Money does matter but how much it matters is for you to decide.

When you look at your bills each month, you may feel overwhelmed by the amount of money that you're spending on debt. Sometimes debt might seem like a trap that you only want to fight your way out of, but not all debt is bad.

When a lender looks at your credit report to see what kinds of accounts you have, they will look at some debts more favorably than others. If you're focusing on getting out of debt, you first need to understand which debts are considered bad and which are considered good.

## Good Debt

Some of your debt might be considered an investment. You're probably thinking, "How can anything as bad as debt be considered an investment?" If you took on the debt to purchase something that will increase in value and can contribute to your overall financial health, then it's very possible that debt is a good one.

For example, a home purchase can be considered to be a good debt. Since homes usually appreciate in value, the mortgage loan you take out to pay for the home is an investment. Another example of a good debt is a student loan taken out to finance a college education. Earning a college degree usually means that you'll make more money over your lifetime.

## Bad Debt

Just like there is good debt, there are some bad debts too. When you use debt to finance things that can be consumed, you aren't accumulating good debt. This is the kind of debt that creates an unhealthy financial situation. Credit card debt is often considered bad debt because of the nature of items that credit cards are used to purchase. You should never accumulate debt to purchase everyday items like clothes or food. If you use a credit card for these types of purchases, you should pay the balance in full each month.

Even debt used to finance a vacation is bad debt. Even though it might help you feel better and be more productive once you return, a vacation does not appreciate in value. Don't use debt to pay for a vacation and especially don't use it to pay for a vacation you can't afford.

## Putting It Into Practice

Good debt is obtained through making wise decisions about your future, not for the sole purpose of having good debt. For example, you might make the decision to obtain your Master's degree to increase your earning potential. Taking out a student loan, if you have no other way of financing your education, is a valid reason for taking on additional debt.

Let's say you're analyzing your financial picture, trying to decide how to pay off your debts. It's usually a good idea to focus on paying off your bad debts first. Since they provide no value, they're more costly than your good debts. You should pay off credit cards and auto loans before tackling mortgages or student loans.

Some people consider using good debt to pay off bad debt, like getting a mortgage for \$110,000 instead of \$100,000 and using the extra to pay off credit card balances. This isn't a good idea for several reasons. First, repaying debt with debt is never a good idea. Second, it ends up taking longer to pay off the mortgage than it would have otherwise. Third, the higher mortgage increases your monthly payments and the time it takes to build equity in your home. Use cash to repay debts, not more debt.

You must still be careful that you don't take on too much debt, even if it's good debt. If you're overloaded with debt, then it doesn't matter whether the debt is good or bad, it still hurts your financial health.

## **Credits cards are a convenience, not a crutch.**

Credit cards are a great way to make purchases and record to the penny your spending. They also provide a way to postpone payment on items and thereby earn more interest on your money.

For example, if you have a money market account that gives you 5% annual interest and you spend \$1000 a month through your credit card, you can keep that \$1000 in your money market account for an additional month. At the end of a year you would have earned an additional \$51.16 for doing nothing.

Now \$51 may not be much but it's free!

Also you can use your credit card statements to keep track of exactly how much you are spending and where your money goes. With some credit cards you can use personal finance software to download your credit card transactions from the Internet right to your home computer.

Credit cards may actually save you money. Some people avoid making purchases if they do not have cash. Cash seems to "burn a hole" in our pockets, it just disappears. It is so easy to spend and it is right there. But a credit card takes more effort and you know that you have to pay the bill later that month.

Your credit card may also offer a rewards program where you get cash back, frequent flyer miles or discounts on services and merchandise.

Credit cards are convenient. Some purchases, especially those on the Internet, will only accept credit card payment. Also you don't have to continually go to the bank or ATM to get cash.

A credit card also provides a measure of safety. You don't have to carry large amounts of cash for large purchases. Even if your card or credit card number is stolen, you are not responsible for the thief's use of your card.

Yet, credit cards can also be a crutch. Too many people see their credit limit not as the maximum amount of debt they can go into, but as an account full of money that they can spend.

Average household consumer credit balances have now topped \$7000. The monthly interest charge for a credit card charging 18% interest is over \$100. More than \$1200 a year just in interest.

And this interest is not like home mortgage interest that you can deduct from your taxes. You are paying an additional 15-36% on top of the \$1200 for taxes on the interest you are charged. That brings your interest charge total up to \$1400-1600 each year. Even more if your balance or interest rate is higher.

What is ridiculous is that many people who are paying 18% interest rates on credit are also investing in a stock market that only averages 11%. Or worse, keeping money in money market, savings accounts, or CDs that only pay .5-3%.

Want an investment that returns over 20%? Invest in paying down your debts. In the above example you can save over 20% with taxes factored in.

Many people have developed the habit of using their credit cards to buy what they want now and pay for it later. They then make only the minimum payments required. Often, the minimum payment is set so that you only pay the monthly finance charge (interest) or just a small amount above it.

This will keep people paying that 18% rate for years. A \$1000 purchase can end up costing \$1500 when paid off after 5 years. Ironically many of these same people will wait months for a sale so that the item's price goes down 10-20% and then make a purchase on their credit card and end up giving the savings to the credit card company instead.

Sometimes the credit card can lead a person into living a lifestyle that is beyond their means. If a person gets in the habit of dining out two to three times a week and these meals are paid for by credit card, the card balance increases quickly. Often the additional expense was not planned or budgeted. People can even end up spending more each month than they actually earn.

This can continue as long as the credit card balance is below the limit and the person makes their regular monthly payments. But as soon as the credit limit is reached, many credit companies will increase the credit limit and give the person more room to get into debt. I have personally seen a credit card limit expanded by \$10,000 within three months.

This cycle can continue until the person is required to make a minimum payment that is more than they can afford. Now not only do they have to cut back on the lifestyle they have grown accustomed to over the years, but they also have to either increase their income or cut out things they enjoyed before increasing their lifestyle with their credit card.

Also, what happens if the person is suddenly out of work or has to take a pay cut or lower paying job. That's right, the credit card bills keep coming. And many people rely on the remainder of their credit limit to supplement their income until they are working again or can find a better paying job.

We have seen this cycle in America increase average credit card balances each year and eat up the equity in many people's homes. Home equity loans are used as credit cards to live a lifestyle that is beyond people's means, or to purchase toys they really can't afford to buy let alone keep and use.

The home equity money is used to "pay off high interest credit card debt" as the ads suggest. Then people continue the habit of living off their credit cards and get right back into debt again.

So what is the answer to America's growing debt problem? Abolish credit cards? Nationally imposed credit limits?

How about a little old fashioned self-discipline? I know it's not in style anymore but it is still the best policy.

Bottom line: Pay off your credit card balance each month. Don't buy something now and expect the big end of year bonus to pay off your credit card. Even if you do get it, you will probably spend it on something else.

Don't fall into the habit of living off your credit cards. If you have \$1000 of disposable income to spend each month, whether through a credit card or in cash, only spend the \$1000. Don't try to make up for extra expense this month by assuming you can catch up on your credit card payment next month. It won't happen.

If you have developed bad credit habits, cut up your credit cards, or only keep one for emergencies and resolve to pay off the balance each month. Then create a plan to get yourself out of debt and stick to it.

You can relieve stress, avoid family conflicts and sleep better at night knowing that there are no credit card wolves howling at your door.

## **Debt**

Most everyone has some debt, some more than others. However, the type of debt you have has a significant impact on your financial situation.

There is good debt and bad debt. You use good debt to enhance your situation and increase your net worth. You should avoid bad debt altogether.

Here's how to tell the difference between good debt and bad debt. If you borrow money and spend it on something that going to go up in value, that's good debt. If you borrow money and spend it on something that is going to go down in value, that's bad debt.

The reason is that debt is leverage. It magnifies the impact of what you spend the borrowed money on. If you borrow money and spend it on things that go down in value, then you pay more for those things that you would have if you didn't borrow the money. but if you borrow money for something that goes up in value, your investment pays off more.

For example, if you put \$20,000 down and borrow \$80,000 for a home, then you can buy a

\$100,000 home. If that home goes up 10% in value, then you made \$10,000. But the bank doesn't get any of it. It's all yours. So while the property only went up 10%, your investment went up 50% from \$20,000 to \$30,000. Debt is leverage and magnifies the result. If the home had gone down 10%, you would have lost 50%.

The biggest change in how you see debt will come from your understanding that debt is leverage. Everything you use it for gets magnified, good or bad. So when you borrow money for a car that will eventually be useless, you are magnifying the cost. That's bad. When you borrow money to take a trip or to live beyond your means, you are magnifying that cost too. That's worse.

While buying a home isn't what most people want to think about after the recent collapse, mortgages fixed and affordable are good use of debt. There are always bumps in the road, but if you aren't trying to flip a house in some get rich quick scheme, real estate is a solid investment. The leverage from the borrowing combined with the tax deductions and your continued paying off of the principal add up to most people's largest nest egg.

To use debt wisely, borrow what you can afford to pay back, use it to buy appreciating assets, and be in it for the long term. To use debt unwisely, just look around and do what other people are doing.

## Identity Theft

Limiting exposure of personal information is the best way to protect yourself from fraud.

For the sixth consecutive year, identity theft surpassed construction, credit card, and debt collection fraud as the most prevalent form of consumer fraud, according to the Federal Trade Commission which received 255,000 identity theft complaints last year.

Many consumers associate identity theft with email solicitations and computer firewall breaches, but checks, credit cards and Social Security numbers remain targets as well. To protect yourself from becoming a victim, follow these tips to prevent identity theft.

Checks:

- Use your initials and last name when ordering printed checks. A check forger won't know how you sign your checks, but your bank will.
- Do not have your home phone number or Social Security number printed on your checks. Use your work phone number. Use a post office box or work address instead of your home address.
- Order new checks from your bank and pick them up at the bank, rather than having them sent to your home mailbox.

Credit cards:

- When paying credit card bills, write only the last four digits of the account number in the check memo line.
- Do not sign the back of your credit card. Instead write, “Photo ID required.”
- Photocopy both sides of your driver’s license, credit cards, and other important contents of your wallet. In the event it is stolen, you’ll know exactly what is missing.
- Keep a list of your credit card numbers and their toll-free customer service numbers so you can cancel cards quickly if lost or stolen. Keep the list in a safe place in your home, not in your wallet.

Social Security Number:

- Do not carry your Social Security card in your wallet. Memorize the number and put the original card in a safe place.
- If you believe your Social Security number has been compromised, contact the Social Security Administration fraud line 800-269-0271.

PINs and Passwords:

- Do not write your PIN on the back of the card or on anything else in your wallet.
- Use different PINs for each debit and credit card. If you have too many to remember, consider reducing the number of cards you carry in your wallet.
- Do not use easily available information, like your birth date, phone number or part of your Social Security number, for PINs and passwords.

Mail and Trash:

- Use post office collection boxes for outgoing mail, rather than your home mail box.
- Shred any trash that may contain personal information, including charge receipts, credit applications, insurance forms, medical statements, checks and bank statements, expired credit and debit cards, and direct mail credit offers.
- You can opt not to receive direct mail credit offers by calling 888-567-8688.

If your wallet is stolen, you should immediately:

- File a police report to document the theft and the wallet contents.
- Contact one of the national credit reporting organizations (listed below) to have a fraud alert placed on your name and Social Security number. The organization you contact is required to contact the other two. If the thief’s purchases initiate a credit check, the credit reporting

organization can alert the merchant. Placing a fraud alert entitles you to free copies of your credit reports.

- Equifax 800-525-6285
- Experian 888-397-3742
- Trans Union 800-680-7289
  
- Close all accounts for missing credit cards. Check your credit reports for accounts opened fraudulently.
  
- File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission, which maintains a database of identity theft cases, online at [www.consumer.gov/idtheft](http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft). This database assists law enforcement agencies and helps the FTC learn more about identity theft.
  
- Notify your bank if your wallet contained a checkbook or debit/ATM cards.

## FDIC Coverage

With the recent bank failures, and possibly more to come, retirees are understandably worried about their bank deposits and Federal Deposit Insurance Coverage (FDIC). All of the major news networks covered this subject recently and much of that coverage was misleading and left viewers ill advised about the scope of their FDIC coverage.

In 2009 the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), which preserves and promotes public confidence in the U.S. financial system by insuring deposits in banks and thrift institutions, increased coverage up to \$250,000 (through December 31, 2013).

After 2013, the insured amounts may decrease to its previous levels. FDIC insured banks now cover up to \$250,000 that you have deposited in checking, savings, and NOW accounts, certificates of deposit (CDs), money market deposit bank accounts, and \$250,000 in IRA retirement accounts in any one bank per depositor. What most don't realize is that FDIC insurance coverage expands substantially above the \$250,000 limit for special kinds of accounts or ownership categories. The key to expanding your coverage in one bank is to register your accounts differently within the same bank and by establishing formal or informal revocable trust account designations where appropriate. Designating bank accounts In Trust for or Pay on Death or setting up wills and revocable trusts permits you to extend your coverage dramatically and this type of registration also helps you avoid probate when settling an estate. You can also open accounts in other banks and receive the same FDIC protection. For example, if you have \$250,000 each in two different FDIC insured banks you are covered for up to \$500,000 if both banks fail.

The FDIC guide located online at <http://www.fdic.gov/deposit/deposits/insured/yid.pdf> shows an example of POD accounts with multiple owners and beneficiaries on page 13 that provides \$1,000,000 in FDIC coverage at one bank. One news report stated that the FDIC doesn't cover safe deposit box contents and that is correct. The FDIC only covers deposit accounts. However, they failed to explain that in the event of a bank failure, in most cases an acquiring institution would take

over the failed bank's offices, including locations with safe deposit boxes. If no acquirer can be found the FDIC would send box holders instructions for removing the contents of their boxes. The FDIC advises safety box holders to read the contract you signed with the bank when you rented the safe deposit box in the event that some type of insurance is provided. Some banks may make a very limited payment if the box or contents are damaged or destroyed, depending on the circumstances. If you are concerned about the safety, or replacement of items you have put in a safe deposit box, then you may wish to consider purchasing fire and theft insurance. Usually such insurance is part of a homeowner's or tenant's insurance policy for a residence and its contents. Again, consult your insurance agent for more information.

Use the following checklist and resources to determine your actual FDIC coverage at each bank that you have funds deposited. I used all of these resources and found them to be easy to use and very helpful. The EDIE Calculator allows you to enter all of your account information and registrations to show you exactly what is and isn't covered at your bank. A great tool and I highly recommend using it to make sure your accounts are fully covered.

The FDIC does NOT insure stocks, bank brokerage accounts, mutual funds including mutual fund money market accounts or other non-deposit investments. The FDIC only covers the deposit accounts listed earlier in this article. However, the Securities Investors Protection Corporation (SIPC), a non government entity, replaces missing stocks and other securities in customer accounts held by its members up to \$500,000, including up to \$100,000 in cash, if a member brokerage or bank brokerage subsidiary fails. For more information contact [www.SIPC.org](http://www.SIPC.org).

FDIC Check List:

- Determine if your bank is FDIC insured
- Use the EDIE Calculator to determine your total FDIC coverage
- Research ITF and POD account designations to expand coverage
- If your deposits exceed your coverage at one bank, open accounts at other FDIC insured banks. Remember, each bank is insured separately

# Smarter-ness

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Smarterness, what is meant by this? Frankly, I don't know but it sounded good. I do know that you must be smart when trying to grab reference documents and website locations. Website searches provide too many sites to search. Just searching the term 'federal retirement' yielded 35 million web sites. How is a person with some limited computer skills suppose to find what they are looking for?

The following pages outline some, if not all, the forms needed during this phase of your working career.

## Useful Forms

### **Federal Employee Group Life Insurance**

The below forms are available for downloading from the Office of Personnel and Management's website. Their address is [www.opm.gov/insure/life/fegli](http://www.opm.gov/insure/life/fegli)

#### Publications

- FE 76-21, FEGLI Booklet for Federal Employees
- FE 76-20, FEGLI Booklet for Postal Employees
- RI 76-12, Information for Retirees and their Families
- RI 76-26, FEGLI Handbook

#### Standard Forms

- SF 2817, Life Insurance Election
- SF 2818, Continuation of Life Insurance
- SF 2819, Notice of Conversion Privilege
- SF 2820, Certification of Insured Employee's Retired Status
- SF 2821, Agency Certification of Insurance Status
- SF 2822, Request for Insurance
- SF 2823, Designation of Beneficiary

#### Claims Forms

- FE-6, Claim for Death Benefits
- FE-6 DEP, Statement of Claim, Option C – Family Life Insurance
- FE-7, Claim for Accidental Dismemberment
- FE-8, Living Benefits Claim Form

## **Thrift Savings Plan**

The below forms are available for download from the TSP website or, in some cases, from your human resources office. The TSP website is [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov).

- TSP-1, Election Form Use this form to start, stop, or change the amount of your contributions to the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). Return the completed form to your agency personnel or benefits office.
- TSP-1-C, Catch-Up Contribution Election For participants age 50 or older to start, stop, or change "catch-up" contributions to the TSP.
- TSP-3, Designation of Beneficiary Name a person or persons to receive your account balance after your death. Both civilians and uniformed services members should now use Form TSP-3.
- TSP-9, Change in Address for Separated Participant Use this form to change your TSP account address if you are separated from Federal service. If you are separated, you may also request a change of address online using My Account. You will need to enter your TSP account number and your Web password to make this change.
- TSP-15, Change in Name for Separated Participants Use this form to change your name for your TSP account if you are no longer employed as a Federal civilian employee. You will need to provide documentation to the TSP.
- TSP-16, Exception to Spousal Requirements Request a waiver of the spouse signature requirements for loans and withdrawals.
- TSP-17, Information Relating to Deceased Participant Use this form to provide information about potential beneficiaries of a deceased participant's Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) account.
- TSP-20, Loan Application Request a general purpose or residential TSP loan.
- TSP-25, Automatic Enrollment Refund Request Request a refund of the contributions to your TSP account (and their earnings) that were deducted from your pay due to automatic enrollment. The TSP must receive this form no later than 90 days from the date of your first contribution.
- TSP-26, Loan Payment Coupon For use by participants who would like to make loan payments in addition to payments made through payroll deductions.
- TSP-41, Notification to TSP of Nonpay Status Agency representatives should use this form to notify the TSP record keeper when a participant who has a TSP loan is placed in an approved nonpay status, or to notify the TSP record keeper when a participant who entered nonpay status returns to pay status.
- TSP-60, Request for a Transfer Into the TSP Request to have an amount transferred or rolled over into the TSP from an IRA or other eligible plan.

- TSP-65, Request to Combine Uniformed Services and Civilian TSP Accounts If you have both a civilian and a uniformed services TSP account, use this form to combine your accounts after separating from either Federal civilian employment or from the uniformed services.
- TSP-70, Request for Full Withdrawal Request an immediate withdrawal of your entire vested account balance, to be paid after your agency confirms your separation from Federal service.
- TSP-70-A, Late Request for Full Withdrawal This form is only for participants who are age 70½ or older, who failed to make a withdrawal by the mandatory deadline, and whose accounts have been abandoned and forfeited to the TSP.
- TSP-73, Change in Monthly Payments Only for use by separated participants who are already receiving monthly payments.
- TSP-75, Age-Based In-Service Withdrawal Request (2/2010)
- Participants who are age 59 ½ or older and still employed by the Federal Government can use this form to request a withdrawal from their TSP accounts.
- TSP-76, Financial Hardship In-Service Withdrawal Request Use this form to request a financial hardship withdrawal while still employed.
- TSP-77, Request for Partial Withdrawal When Separated Participants who are separated from Federal service can use this form to request a one-time partial withdrawal of \$1,000 or more from their TSP accounts.
- W-4P, Withholding Certificate for Pension or Annuity Payments Use IRS Form W-4P to request a change to the default tax withholding for a withdrawal.

### **Office of Personnel Management**

Standard Forms are used government wide for various employment and benefits program purposes.

- SF 15, Application for 10-Point Veteran's Preference
- SF 39, Request for Referral of Eligibles
- SF 50, Notification of Personnel Action
- SF 52, Request for Personnel Action
- SF 59, Request for Approval of Non-Competitive Action
- SF 61, Appointment Affidavits
- SF 62, Agency Request to Pass Over a Preference Eligible or Object to an Eligible
- SF 75, Request for Preliminary Employment Data
- SF 85, Questionnaire for Non-Sensitive Positions
- SF 85P, Questionnaire for Public Trust Positions
- SF 85P-S, Supplemental Questionnaire for Selected Positions
- SF 86, Questionnaire for National Security Positions
- SF 86A, Continuation Sheet for Questionnaires SF 86, SF 85P, and SF 85

- SF 86C, Standard Form 86 Certification
- SF-113A, Monthly Report of Federal Civilian Employment
- SF-113G, Monthly Report of Full-Time Equivalent/Work-Year Civilian Employment
- SF 144, Statement of Prior Federal Service
- SF 144A, Statement of Prior Federal Service - Worksheet
- SF 181, Ethnicity and Race Identification
- SF 182, Authorization, Agreement and Certification of Training
- SF 256, Self-Identification of Reportable Handicap
- SF 813, Verification of A Military Retiree's Service in Nonwartime Campaigns or Expeditions
- SF 1152, Designation of Beneficiary -- Unpaid Compensation of Deceased Civilian Employee
- SF 1153, Claim for Unpaid Compensation of Deceased Civilian Employee
- SF 1187, Request for Payroll Deductions for Labor Organization Dues
- SF-1188, Cancellation of Payroll Deductions for Labor Organization Dues
- SF-2800, Application for Death Benefits (Civil Service Retirement System) –
- SF-2800A, Documentation and Elections in Support of Application for Death Benefits When Deceased Was an Employee at the Time of Death
- SF-2801, Application for Immediate Retirement (CSRS)
- SF-2802, Application for Refund of Retirement Deductions (CSRS)
- SF 2803, Application to Make Deposit or Redeposit
- SF 2804, Application to Make Voluntary Contributions, CSRS – Read More at: SF 2804-A
- SF 2805, Request for Recovery of Debt Due the United States
- SF 2806, Individual Retirement Record
- SF 2806-1, Notice of Correction of Individual Retirement Record
- SF 2807, Register of Separations and Transfers (CSRS)
- SF 2808, Designation of Beneficiary, CSRS
- SF 2809, Employee Health Benefits Registration Form
- SF-2810, Notice of Change in Health Benefits Enrollment
- SF 2817, Life Insurance Election: Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance Program
- SF 2818, Continuation of Life Insurance Coverage as an Annuitant or Compensationner
- SF 2819, Notice of Conversion Privilege, Federal Employee's Group Life Insurance Program
- SF 2820, Certification of Insured Employee's Retired Status
- SF 2821, Agency Certification of Insurance Status
- SF 2822, Request for Insurance
- SF 2823, Designation of Beneficiary, Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance Program
- SF 3101, Notice of Correction of Individual Retirement Record
- SF 3100, Individual Retirement Record (FERS)

- SF 3102, Designation of Beneficiary, Federal Employees Retirement System
- SF 3103, Register of Separations and Transfers
- SF 3104, Application for Death Benefit (FERS)
- SF 3104B, Documentation and Elections in Support of Application for Death Benefits when Deceased was an Employee at the Time of Death (FERS)
- SF 3106, Application For Refund of Retirement Deductions (Federal Employees Retirement System) (SF 3106A, Current/Former Spouse's Notification for Refund Retirement Deductions is included with this form.)
- SF-3107, Application for Immediate Retirement (Federal Employees Retirement System) –
- SF-3108, Application to Make Service Credit Payment (Federal Employees Retirement System)
- SF-3109, Election of Coverage (Federal Employees Retirement System)
- SF 3110, Former Spouse's Consent to FERS Election
- SF 3111, Request for Waiver, Extension, or Search in Connection with Election of FERS Coverage, Federal Employees Retirement System
- SF-3112, Documentation in Support of Disability Retirement Application

### **Civil Service Retirement System**

- SF-2800-1, Applying for Death Benefits under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS)
- SF-2801A, Applying for Immediate Retirement Under CSRS

### **Federal Employee Retirement System**

- SF 3109, Election of Coverage, FERS
- SF 3110, Former Spouse's Consent to FERS Election
- SF 3111, Request for Waiver, Extension, or Search
- SF 3102, Designation of Beneficiary

### **Retirement and Insurance Forms**

Retirement and Insurance Forms are used to process retirement and insurance benefits.

- RI 10-125, Federal Employee Retirement Coverage Corrections Act (FERCCA) Election Form
- RI 16-28, Authorization for Direct Payments
- RI 20-7, Representative Payee Application
- RI 20-64, Letter Reply to Request for Information
- RI 20-64A, Former Spouse Survivor Annuity Election
- RI 20-97, Estimated Earnings During Military Service
- RI 20-120, Request for Change to Unreduced Annuity

- RI 20-122, Certification for Physicians Comparability Allowances (PCA)
- RI 25-14, Self-Certification of Full-Time School Attendance For The School Year
- RI 25-15, Notice of Change in Student's Status
- RI 25-41, Initial Certification of Full-Time School Attendance
- RI 25-49, Verification of Full-Time School Attendance
- RI 30-1, Request for Information
- RI 30-10, Disabled Dependent Questionnaire
- RI 34-1, Financial Resources Questionnaire
- RI 38-31, We Need More Information About Your Missing Payment
- RI 38-45, We Need the Social Security Number of the Person Named Below
- RI 38-122, Alternative Annuity and Rollover Election
- RI 38-124, Voluntary Contributions Election
- RI 38-128, It's Time to Sign-up for Direct Deposit
- RI 38-133, Certification for Title 38 Physicians and Dentists
- RI 76-10, Assignment of Federal Employee's Group Life Insurance
- RI 79-9, Health Benefits Cancellation/Suspension Confirmation
- RI 92-19, Application for Deferred or Postponed Retirement - Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS)
- RI 92-22, Annuity Supplement Earnings Report

## Useful Web Sites

The below web sites provide a useful list of resources to assist in your pursuit of retirement and the completion of your goals.

- [www.forms.gov](http://www.forms.gov) - The US Governments official hub for federal forms.
- [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) - The Official U.S. Government Site for People with Medicare.
- [www.opm.gov](http://www.opm.gov) - The official website of the Office of Personnel Management.
- [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) - Regulations.gov is the online source for U.S. government regulations from nearly 300 federal agencies.
- [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov) - The official site for Social Security. The website contains a wealth of information and resources including on-line databases and publications.
- [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov) - The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) is a retirement savings and investment plan for Federal employees and members of the uniformed services, including the Ready Reserve.
- [www.usa.gov](http://www.usa.gov) - The official U.S. gateway to all government information.
- [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) - The official web page for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

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