

## § 402.175

under the Privacy Act. (Exception: If the request is for purposes of administering employee benefits covered by the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA), even if the request is covered by section 205(c)(2)(A) of the Act, we will charge under § 402.175.)

### § 402.175 Fees for providing information and related services for non-program purposes.

(a) *General.* Section 1106(c) of the Social Security Act permits the Commissioner to require requesters of information to pay the full cost of supplying the information where the information is requested to comply with the ERISA, or “\*\*\* for any other purpose not directly related to the administration of the program or programs under \*\*\*” the Social Security Act. This may be done notwithstanding the fee provisions of the FOIA and the Privacy Act or any other provision of law. As used in this section—

(1) Full cost includes the direct and indirect costs to SSA (including costs of duplication) of providing information and related services under section 1106(c) of the Act; and

(2) Full cost of an employee’s time includes fringe benefits and overhead costs such as rent and utilities.

(b) *Non-program related requests.* We consider a request for information which does not meet or equal any of the criteria in § 402.170 to be non-program related. (Whether a request for information about an individual is made by that individual or by someone else is not a factor.) In responding to these requests, or requests for ERISA purposes, we will charge the full cost of our services as described in paragraph (c) of this section.

(c) *Fee schedule.* Our fee schedule for non-program related requests is:

(1) *Manual searching for records.* Full cost of the employee’s time.

(2) *Photocopying, or reproducing records such as magnetic tapes or punch cards.* Full cost of the operator’s time plus the full cost of the machine time and the materials used.

(3) *Use of electronic data processing equipment to obtain records.* Our full cost for the service, including computer search time, computer runs and print-

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outs, and the time of computer programmers and operators and other employees.

(4) *Certification or authentication of records.* Full cost of certification or authentication.

(5) *Forwarding materials to destination.* If you request special arrangements for forwarding the material, we will charge you the full cost of this service (e.g., you request express mail or a commercial delivery service). If no special forwarding arrangements are requested, we will charge you the full cost of the service, including the U.S. Postal Service cost.

(6) *Performing other special services.* If we agree to provide any special services you request, we will charge you the full cost of the time of the employee who performs the service, plus the full cost of any machine time and materials that the employee uses.

(7) *Billing exceeds cost of service.* Generally we will not charge you a fee when the cost of the service is less than the cost of sending you a bill. However, where an individual, organization, or governmental unit makes multiple separate requests, we will total the costs incurred and bill the requester for the services rendered.

(d) *Fee for copies of printed materials.* When extra copies of printed material are available, the charge is generally 1 cent per page. If the material may be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, the charge is that set by the Superintendent. The Superintendent’s address is in § 402.40.

(e) *Charging when requested record not found.* We may charge you for search time, even though we fail to find the records. We may also charge you for search time if the records we locate are exempt from disclosure.

### § 402.180 Procedure on assessing and collecting fees for providing records.

(a) We will generally assume that when you send us a request, you agree to pay for the services needed to locate and send that record to you. You may specify in your request a limit on the amount you are willing to spend. If you do that or include with your request a payment that does not cover our fee, we will notify you if it appears that the

fee will exceed that amount and ask whether you want us to continue to process your request. Also, before we start work on your request under § 402.120, we will generally notify you of our exact or estimated charge for the information, unless it is clear that you have a reasonable idea of the cost.

(b) If you have failed to pay previous bills in a timely fashion, or if our initial review of your request indicates that we will charge you fees exceeding \$250, we will require you to pay your past due fees and/or the estimated fees, or a deposit, before we start searching for the records you want. If so, we will let you know promptly upon receiving your request. In such cases, administrative time limits (i.e., ten working days from receipt of initial requests and 20 working days from receipt of appeals from initial denials, plus permissible extensions of these time limits) will begin only after we come to an agreement with you over payment of fees, or decide that fee waiver or reduction is appropriate.

(c) We will normally require you to pay all fees before we furnish the records to you. We may, at our discretion, send you a bill along with or following the furnishing of the records. For example, we may do this if you have a history of prompt payment. We may also, at our discretion, aggregate the charges for certain time periods in order to avoid sending numerous small bills to frequent requesters, or to businesses or agents representing requesters. For example, we might send a bill to such a requester once a month. Fees should be paid in accordance with the instructions furnished by the person who responds to your requests.

(d) Payment of fees will be made by check or money order payable to "Social Security Administration".

**§ 402.185 Waiver or reduction of fees in the public interest.**

(a) *Standard.* We will waive or reduce the fees we would otherwise charge if disclosure of the information meets both tests which are explained in paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section:

(1) It is in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the oper-

ations or activities of the government; and

(2) It is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester.

(b) *Public interest.* The disclosure passes the first test only if it furthers the specific public interest of being likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of government operations or activities, regardless of any other public interest it may further. In analyzing this question, we will consider the following factors:

(1) How, if at all, do the records to be disclosed pertain to the operations or activities of the Federal Government?

(2) Would disclosure of the records reveal any meaningful information about government operations or activities? Can one learn from these records anything about such operations that is not already public knowledge?

(3) Will the disclosure advance the understanding of the general public as distinguished from a narrow segment of interested persons? Under this factor we may consider whether the requester is in a position to contribute to public understanding. For example, we may consider whether the requester has such knowledge or expertise as may be necessary to understand the information, and whether the requester's intended use of the information would be likely to disseminate the information among the public. An unsupported claim to be doing research for a book or article does not demonstrate that likelihood, while such a claim by a representative of the news media is better evidence.

(4) Will the contribution to public understanding be a significant one? Will the public's understanding of the government's operations be substantially greater as a result of the disclosure?

(c) *Not primarily in the requester's commercial interest.* If the disclosure passes the test of furthering the specific public interest described in paragraph (b) of this section, we will determine whether it also furthers the requester's commercial interest and, if so, whether this effect outweighs the advancement of that public interest. In applying this second test, we will consider the following factors:

(1) Would the disclosure further a commercial interest of the requester,