



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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The 1999 Technical Panel on Assumptions and Methods

by Edward W. Frees

The first Technical Panel of the Social Security Advisory Board summarized its findings in a report released in November 1999.

Created with legislation enacted in 1994, the Social Security Advisory Board is an independent, bipartisan group. The Advisory Board assumed the role of Advisory Councils in appointing technical panels to advise on the assumptions and methods used in the Trustees Report to evaluate the status of Social Security Trust Funds. The 1999 Technical Panel also examined issues regarding equity investments as well as other assumptions and methods needed to evaluate various reform proposals. The panel was composed of seven economists, two demographers, and three actuaries.

Regarding the Trustees Report that is produced by the Social Security Administration's Office of the Chief Actuary, the panel affirmed that the methods and assumptions used are reasonable and accurate. However, the panel recommended some small changes in the assumptions used, particularly regarding overly pessimistic mortality assumptions. Further, the panel called for additional research on various issues pertaining to the uncertainty of future Trust Fund balances. Copies of the report are available from the Social Security Advisory Board, 400 Virginia Avenue, SW, Suite 625, Washington DC, 20024, www.ssab.gov.

Edward W. Frees, FSA, is a professor and chair, Time Insurance Professor of Actuarial Science at the University of Wisconsin - Madison. He can be reached at jfrees@bus.wisc.edu.

Office of the Joint Board Memorandum

by Patrick McDonough,
Executive Director, Joint Board
for the Enrollment of Actuaries

I am pleased to announce the appointment of two full-time members of the Office of the Joint Board:

- 1) Elizabeth VanOsten, as Attorney-Advisor, and
- 2) Gloria Walker, as Program Analyst

Ms. VanOsten, who comes to us from a position as a Tax Law Specialist in the Employee Plans Division of I.R.S., will work closely with me in the overall supervision and management of the Office. She will also assume primary responsibility for the processing of disciplinary cases that are presented to us under the terms of the Joint Board regulations. Her telephone number is (202) 694-1855.

Ms. Walker, who was formerly a Program Analyst in the office of the National Chief of (I.R.S.) Appeal, will handle all the regular administrative work of the Joint Board. She takes over the functions temporarily assumed by Karen Copeland after the departure of Darryl Carter. Ms. Walker can be reached by telephone at (202) 694-1854.

Please join me in welcoming these two people to our program and feel free to call them to discuss any matters concerning the work of the Joint Board Office.

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- 4) A tax haven is a country or other political entity that offers outside businesses and individuals a climate of minimal or nonexistent taxation. In some cases, the low taxes apply not only to those levied by the tax haven itself, but also to the possibility of reducing or avoiding taxes levied in the investor's home country (Scott, 1988, p. 353).

References

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