**Social Security Column**

HOW WE PROTECT YOU FROM MISLEADING ADVERTISING AND COMMUNICATIONS

**By <Name>**

**Social Security <Title> in <Place>**



Social Security works with our Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to protect you from scams that use Social Security as bait. *Section 1140 of the Social Security Act* allows OIG to impose severe penalties against anyone who engages in misleading Social Security-related advertising or imposter communications.

OIG may impose a penalty against anyone who:

* Mails misleading solicitations that appear to be from or authorized by Social Security.
* Operates an imposter website or social media account designed to look like it belongs to or is authorized by Social Security.
* Sends emails or text messages or makes telephone calls claiming to be from Social Security.
* Sells Social Security’s free forms, applications, and publications without our written approval.
* Charges a fee for a service that Social Security provides free of charge without providing a clearly visible notice that Social Security provides the service for free.

If you receive a misleading or suspicious Social Security-related advertisement, phone call or email, you should let us know right away. Try to capture as many details as you can.

Here’s what you can do:

* For suspicious websites or social media accounts, please take a screenshot of the page. Note the website address or social media link – and how you came across it.
* For emails and text messages, capture the entire message and any links or attachments.
* For mail, retain the complete communication, including the outside envelope and all inserts.
* For telephone solicitations, note the caller identification phone number and any company name or call back number provided by the caller or recorded message.

You can help us stop misleading advertising and communications. We encourage you to report possible scams to the OIG at [oig.ssa.gov/report](https://oig.ssa.gov/report/). You can also call our fraud hotline at 1-800-269-0271 or send an email to OIG.1140@ssa.gov.

To learn more, check out our publication, *What You Need to Know About Misleading Advertising*, at [www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10005.pdf](https://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10005.pdf). You can also review Section 1140 at [www.ssa.gov/OP\_Home/ssact/title11/1140.htm](https://www.ssa.gov/OP_Home/ssact/title11/1140.htm).

Please share this information with friends and family and help us spread the word on social media.

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