

Press Release



How Does the Federal Government Know when Americans Die?

ANDREW EVANS | JULY 20, 2020

When the federal government sent stimulus checks earlier this year, it mistakenly gave about \$1.4 billion to deceased individuals — largely because the Treasury did not have access to the correct information. In a new primer, AAF’s Director of Fiscal Policy Gordon Gray outlines how the federal government tracks the deaths of U.S. citizens as well as how this information is shared across the government.

An excerpt:

Perhaps the most conspicuous federal entity that does not have access to the full death file is the U.S. Department of the Treasury. While the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), a bureau within the Treasury, has access to the full file, the Treasury generally, and the Bureau of the Fiscal Service, which is responsible for the execution of federal payments, does not. The enactment of the Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Improvement Act of 2012 established the Do Not Pay Portal (DNP), which is supposed to serve as a federal “one-stop-shop” for agencies to verify the eligibility of beneficiaries and for helping agencies recover inaccurate payments. SSA has determined, however, that it does not have the authority to share the full death file with the Treasury.

[Read the Primer](#)