

## Electronic Payment Deadline for Benefit Checks Is Fast Approaching

*Treasury Department urges remaining paper check recipients to make the switch now to direct deposit or a prepaid card.*

**Using electronic delivery reduces the risk of identity theft and helps reduce stolen checks and forgeries, as well as decreases the government costs. The Franklin County Office on Aging urges benefit recipients to beware of callers offering to enroll you in the direct deposit program. Do not provide enrollment information unless you initiated the call.**

The U.S. Department of the Treasury reports that 5 million checks continue to be mailed to federal beneficiaries each month. With just two months remaining until the March 1, 2013, electronic payment law goes into effect, the Treasury Department is urging Social Security and other federal benefit recipients to not delay and switch now to either **direct deposit** or the **Direct Express**<sup>®</sup> Debit MasterCard<sup>®</sup> card.

*Out of 50 states, Ohio ranks 5<sup>th</sup> in paper check volume. Franklin County ranks second behind Cuyahoga County for the highest number of Social Security payments by paper check in the State.*

“Choosing **direct deposit** or the **Direct Express**<sup>®</sup> card makes it easier, safer and more convenient for beneficiaries to receive their payments. Switching to an electronic payment is not optional – it’s the law,” said David Lebryk, commissioner of the Treasury Department’s Financial Management Service. “If you or a loved one still receives paper checks for your benefit payments, now is the time to switch. It’s free and easy – just call 1-800-333-1795 or visit [www.GoDirect.org](http://www.GoDirect.org).”

Currently, approximately 93 percent of Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments are being made electronically. Converting the remaining paper check recipients to electronic payments will save American taxpayers \$1 billion over the next 10 years.

The Treasury Department ruled in December 2010 to gradually phase out paper checks for federal benefit payments. Since May 1, 2011, all people newly applying for federal benefits, including Social Security, SSI, Veterans Affairs, Railroad Retirement Board, Office of Personnel Management benefits and other non-tax payments, have had to choose **direct deposit** or the **Direct Express**<sup>®</sup> card at the time they sign up for their benefits. March 1, 2013, is the final deadline by which all remaining federal benefit check recipients must receive their money electronically.

### **Switch to electronic payments now before time runs out**

Sign up for direct deposit or the Direct Express<sup>®</sup> card by calling toll-free 1-800-333-1795, visiting [www.GoDirect.org](http://www.GoDirect.org), or talking to your local federal paying agency office. The process is fast, easy and free. **Do not provide this information to ANYONE unless you have initiated the call.**

- Gather the necessary information ahead of time, most federal benefit recipients can sign up for electronic payments with one phone call.
- You will need your Social Security number or claim number, 12-digital federal benefit check number and the amount of your most recent federal benefit check. If choosing direct deposit, have your financial institution’s routing transit number, account number and account type - checking or savings.
- There are no costs or monthly fees to receive benefits electronically.