



June 20, 2017

MEMORANDUM FOR: Bureau / Operating Unit Chief Privacy Officers and Privacy Act Officers

FROM: Michael J. Toland, Ph.D.  
Departmental Privacy Act Officer (DPAO)

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SUBJECT: Process Requirements for Justifying Collections, Maintenance, and Uses of Social Security Numbers (SSNs)

Consistent with early privacy requirements established by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in 2007<sup>1</sup>, the latest version of OMB Circular A-130 directs federal agencies to eliminate unnecessary collections, maintenance, and uses of Social Security Numbers (SSNs). **An “unnecessary” SSN collection at Commerce is one which fails to meet either of the following two prongs: 1) it is a collection which is required by law or authorized by law, and 2) it is a collection which is determined by the SAOP and DPAO to be needed by the agency to fulfill a compelling business need.** The Commerce SAOP and DPAO assess whether SSN collections are needed during reviews of System of Records Notices (SORNs) and Privacy Impact Assessments (PIAs) which are updated annually.

As part of Commerce’s ongoing SSN reduction effort<sup>2</sup>, this memorandum documents the process requirements for justifying SSN collections which were presented to the Privacy Council on April 25, 2017.

- 1) SORNs submitted for systems of records containing SSNs must include a written justification that identifies the legal authority under which the SSN collection shall be maintained and establishes a compelling business need for the collection.
- 2) PIAs submitted for IT systems which will contain SSNs must identify the legal authority under which the SSN collection shall be maintained, along with an explanation that establishes a compelling business need for the collection.

Please direct any questions regarding this memorandum to Lisa Martin, Deputy Director of Departmental Privacy Operations, who can be reached at (202) 482-2459 and [lmartin1@doc.gov](mailto:lmartin1@doc.gov).

<sup>1</sup> OMB Memorandum 07-16, *Safeguarding Against and Responding to the Breach of Personally Identifiable Information*.

<sup>2</sup> Commerce’s ongoing efforts include reducing truncated or partial SSNs.