GOOD REASONS TO REVIEW YOUR ANNUAL SOCIAL SECURITY STATEMENT NOW

Did you know that determining whether your Social Security earnings record is correct falls squarely on your shoulders—not your current or previous employer(s) or the Social Security Administration? Making sure your information is accurate, and correcting mistakes on your record as soon as possible is critical because your Social Security record is the basis for the computation of your benefit amount in retirement. Here are two compelling reasons to review your annual Social Security statement now, and at least annually thereafter:

1. **Even a "small" error can reduce the amount of your monthly benefit in retirement**, which could add up to a loss of thousands over a period of 20 or 30 years in retirement.

2. **The Social Security Administration imposes a time limit on corrections** to your earnings report of "up to three years, three months, and 15 days after the year in which the wages were paid or the self-employment income was derived."[1]

Reviewing your Social Security statement annually helps to safeguard one of your most important assets in retirement. Your Social Security statement shows the number of work credits you've earned over time and provides estimates for your retirement, disability and survivor benefits.

To access your personal statement online, follow the instructions to set up your account at www.ssa.gov/myaccount/. Then, review the following sections of your statement carefully:

- **Work Credits** - If you've already earned 40 work credits, the minimum required for most benefits, your record will show estimates for retirement, disability and survivors benefits. Otherwise, the statement will show how many credits you still need to qualify for benefits.
- **Earnings Record** - Review your yearly earnings history for accuracy. If any information is incorrect or missing, you may not receive all the benefits you are entitled to in the future. If you need to correct earnings information, follow the instructions provided at www.ssa.gov.
- **Benefit Estimates** - Review your retirement and disability estimates, as well as your survivors benefits estimate for your family.

If you'd like to learn more about the role Social Security benefits play as part of your comprehensive retirement income strategy, or would like help determining the right time to begin taking benefits, contact the office today to schedule time to meet.

[1]https://www.ssa.gov/OP_Home%2Fhandbook/handbook.14/handbook-1423.html

HOW MEN AND WOMEN DIFFER ON SAVING FOR RETIREMENT

Women are less confident about their ability to retire in comfort, according to a recent survey of over 4,000 U.S. workers.[1] While 68% of men say they are “very” or “somewhat confident” in their ability to retire with a comfortable income, only 55% of women agree. One reason is the significant gap in the amount of savings men have accumulated vs. women. While 80% of men and 72% of women have set money aside for retirement, men have saved more than three times the amount of women, with men’s median retirement savings at $115,000 vs. only $34,000 for women workers surveyed.

While pay inequity is a factor in women’s lower savings rates (on average, women earn about 79% of what men do for comparable work), there is evidence that women are better at managing personal debt based on data analysis from a leading credit-reporting agency.[2] Women had slightly higher credit scores than men — 675 for women, compared with 670 for men. While men had slightly more debt on average than women, the difference was only about $1,000. However, women had more credit cards open (3.7) than men (3).

The retirement savings gender gap becomes most meaningful when longevity is factored into the equation. On average, a 65-year-old man can expect to live to age 83, while a 65-year-old woman can expect to live to nearly 86.[3] That means women’s savings need to stretch further.

The most important lesson for women and men seeking a comfortable lifestyle in retirement is that’s it’s never too late to begin or increase savings. Consider the following to energize your retirement savings:

- Contribute the maximum to any employer plans you’re eligible to participate in to benefit from tax-deferred compounding over time.
- No employer plan? Consider opening a Roth IRA.
- Increase the amount you save annually by at least 1% percent of your salary.

If you’d like to learn about strategies to help you remain on track to a comfortable and confident retirement, please contact the office to talk about your goals.

[1] https://www.transamericacenter.org/retirement-research/17th-annual-retirement-survey
[2] http://www.experian.com/blogs/insights/2016/03/men-vs-women-credit-trends/
[3] https://www.ssa.gov/planners/lifeexpectancy.html