



HEATHER SCHREIBER'S

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SOCIAL SECURITY ADVISOR

Social Security Planning for Retirement

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My 2023 End-of-Year Most Frequently Asked Questions

We are winding down 2023 with a readers' favorite (and mine). Many financial professionals get caught off guard by the day-to-day questions they are asked. Thus, we are offering more coverage of frequently asked questions.

These common questions are taken directly from consumers, mostly relayed to me by their financial planners, CPAs, and attorneys. The answers are published here to help you, our loyal subscribers, deal with issues that arise at year's end and successfully navigate the complexity presented by Social Security and Medicare in the New Year!

To put it simply, the SSA will always pay workers their earned retirement benefit before paying an auxiliary benefit. However, if the spousal benefit produces a higher benefit, it will be paid once the higher-earning spouse files.

For former spouses, if the divorce occurred at least two years prior to the lower-earning ex-spouse's claim and the higher-earning ex-spouse is at least age 62, the benefit is payable even if the other spouse hasn't yet filed for benefits.

Unfortunately, if a worker's retirement benefit is higher than 50% of the spouse or ex-spouse's primary insurance amount (PIA), the benefit under the latter will simply be forfeited in lieu of the higher retirement benefit.

Social Security

Can you break it down for me? With the official expiration of the restricted application strategy right around the corner on January 1, 2024, how does this impact how spousal benefits work?

Beginning January 2, 2024, there will only be one rule for the payment of spousal benefits. Deemed filing will apply to everyone, meaning that individuals who are eligible for both a retirement benefit and a spousal benefit (or ex-spousal benefit) will no longer be able to choose to collect a spousal benefit before filing for their own retirement benefit.

I am 64 years old and planning to retire at the end of this year. Starting next year, I will receive five deferred compensation payments annually. I am worried that these payments may affect my ability to receive my full benefits, which I plan to collect in January next year. Specifically, I am concerned about the earnings test and whether these payments will count toward it. Additionally, I am unsure if these payments will affect the amount I pay for Medicare Part B premiums.

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