

LAVAN & NEIDENBERG NEWSLETTER

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SSA Pushes Online Applications in 2012

Online services continue to improve

The Social Security Administration ended 2011 with a celebration of Patty Duke's 65th birthday and official application for Social Security benefits. Duke, an SSA celebrity spokesperson, was featured in a December 14 YouTube video applying for her Social Security benefits on a laptop.

The video highlights the continued transition to online services that make applying for Social Security benefits much easier – so easy you can do it from the comfort of your own home in your PJs as Duke does. The SSA has been transitioning many of their services to paperless - electronic forms, direct deposit or debit card benefit checks. More informative resources are being made available online and as downloadable PDFs.

Applying online for Social Security benefits can be done for regular retirement pay, Medicare, and even disability benefits.

Online Applications May Still Be Difficult for the Disabled

Even online, the application process can still be difficult for people with certain disabilities.

If you suffer from physical conditions like arthritis or vision problems the use of a computer may be difficult for you.

While you can have a family member, friend, or caregiver help you fill out the online application, it's often best to seek help from a Social Security disability lawyer. The experience of a Social Security disability lawyer is a valuable tool for giving your claim the best advantage in being approved without needing to appeal.



Start Your SSD Benefit Application on the Right Track

A Social Security disability lawyer can benefit your SSDI or SSI claim from Day 1. Applicants who complete the initial application process on their own often make critical mistakes that can result in unnecessary denial of their claim and lengthen the approval process.

Your lawyer can help you review your medical evidence, work history, and current health to see that the most important evidence is included in your application. Omitting important medical evidence, miscalculating work credits, and failing to accurately report income can all result in delay or denial of your Social Security disability benefits claim.

Don't Jeopardize Your Claim – Get Professional Help!

While the new online application services may be great for Social Security benefits, SSDI/SSI claims are much more complex and detailed. Innocent mistakes are easily made and could cost you your claim if you omit information or do not fill out the application properly.

Whether you're applying for disability benefits for the first time or you've received a notice of denial and wish to appeal the decision, The Law Offices of LaVan & Neidenberg, P.A. are here to help. We can represent your claim from application to appeal while taking on the burden of preparing all the documentation. To schedule a no cost case evaluation, [contact us today](#) – 1-888-234-5758.

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Global New Year Good Luck Traditions

International good luck traditions for the New Year

We all want to start 2012 off with a bit of extra luck. Many cultures have special traditions and rituals designed to boost your chances at a happy, healthy and profitable New Year!

China – A fresh coat of red paint is added to the front door to many homes as red is a symbol of good luck and happiness. A feast is prepared, but for the first 24 hours of the year all knives are put away to prevent accidents – if anyone cuts themselves it is thought to cut the family's good luck for the year.

England – It is believed that the first visitor to a home in the New Year should be a male and come bearing gifts. Traditional gifts of good luck include coal for the fire, bread for the table, and a drink for the master of the house. The best luck comes when guests enter the front door and leave through the back, and empty-handed guests should not enter first.

Germany – During the New Year's Eve feast, a bit of every dish served at the meal is left on the plate to ensure a well-stocked larder for the coming year.

Greece – A special New Year's loaf of bread is baked containing a coin. When the bread is served, the first slice is for the Christ child, the second for the father of the household, and the third for the house. If the coin is found in the house's slice it is a sign of good luck.

Haiti – Families start out the New Year wearing brand new clothing and exchanging gifts to promote continued good fortune in the coming year.

Hungary – Effigies known as "Jack Straw" are burned to represent the evils and misfortunes of the past year.

Korea – Families place a straw scooper, rake or sieve on their doors and walls to protect their home from evil spirits in the coming year. New clothes are worn to family gatherings where the children pay respects to their elders.

Norway – Rice pudding is a traditional dish served during New Year's meals. A single whole almond is hidden in the pudding and whoever receives the nut in their serving is guaranteed good wealth in the New Year.

Spain – Eating 12 grapes, 1 at every toll of the clock bell, is thought to bring good luck for the 12 months ahead.

Vietnam – Promoting good luck in the New Year begins well before the actual event. Families take time to clean their homes, polish their copper, and pay off their debts to start the next year on a clean note.

Wales – During the midnight New Year celebration the back door of the home is opened to let the old year and any bad luck out and then the front door is opened at the final chime of the 12th clock bell to allow the New Year and good luck to come into the home.

5 RESOLUTIONS FOR HAPPINESS

Make 2012 a year of peace and better living

It seems like 2012 is slated to be a year of change for many, and instead of the typical goals of losing weight or quitting bad habits, consider some of these resolutions for a happier life from amareway.org:

- **Keep a journal of special moments** – whether it's a morning you wake up to a beautiful rainbow or an unexpected phone call from an old friend, keep a list of great moments through the year.
- **Get enough sleep** – while health is often a common topic for resolutions many of us still take sleep for granted. Remember that a well rested body improves overall health and can help you keep other health resolutions.
- **Eat better** – if you're tired of trying to focus on one aspect like weight loss or lower cholesterol consider just making a general resolution to eat better. Don't binge, don't starve, eat sensibly, and look for fresh!
- **Read more** – whether it's a physical book or a portable device like a Kindle, make reading a part of your daily routine.
- **Spend wisely** – finances have been especially tight for many in the past – make 2012 a year to save and spend wisely.

HEALTH NEWS

Thinner brain cortex could signal Alzheimer's risk

Researchers studying the thickness of the brain's cortex have found that patients who experience thinning over a period of analysis were more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease.

The trials conducted at Harvard Medical School reviewed MRI scans of 159 patients with an average age of 76. Three years later, the patients were evaluated by cognitive testing to measure brain function. The worst test scores were reported by the 15% of participants who had the thinnest cortex measurements. The cortex is particularly vulnerable to the effects of Alzheimer's because it contains parts responsible for memory and problem solving skills.

The study may help researchers determine the effectiveness of new medications for treating or preventing this disabling condition.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

It's a new year and a new month full of special days, observances, and events!

NEW YEAR'S DAY – SUNDAY, JANUARY 1, 2012

It's the first day of the new year and while most people are recovering from staying up all night on the 31st, you can be thankful this day falls on a Sunday so you can start the first full week after a day of rest!

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY – MONDAY, JANUARY 16, 2012

The annual celebration of one of America's most iconic civil rights leaders, Martin Luther King Jr. would have celebrated his 83rd birthday on January 15. Congress made his birthday a national holiday in 1983, but the day is celebrated on the 3rd Monday of January to allow for a 3-day weekend. Those with time off are encouraged to do something to serve your community on that day to keep King's dream of human equality alive.

DITCH NEW YEARS RESOLUTIONS DAY – TUESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2012

If you've already gotten discouraged with your New Years' Resolutions in 17 days, today is the official day to ditch them! This is your opportunity to stop struggling with resolutions that are becoming too much of a burden, or officially end those you've already broken.

JANUARY IS THE MONTH OF...

- National Blood Donor Month
- National Braille Literacy Month
- National Bath Safety Month
- National Hobby Month
- National Oatmeal Month
- National Soup Month
- Hot Tea Month

THE 2ND WEEK OF JANUARY – LETTER WRITING WEEK

This is a great idea that may tie in to some of your New Years Resolutions. In the past, letters were a vital part of both communication and record keeping. People wrote letters all the time to send important news, keep in touch with friends and family, and conduct business.

With the invention of email, letter writing has gone by the wayside, and even emailed letters are becoming less common now that social media plays a large role in keeping informed of the news from friends and family.

This week, take the time to write a letter – whether hand-written or digital – and catch up with friends and family. You'd be surprised how an unexpected letter can brighten up someone's day! If you're short on ideas, why not do a New Years letter and recap the highlights and big news from 2011.

Fast 5 for Your New Year

5 tips to achieving a weight loss goal

Whether you're looking to lose 5 pounds or 50, it's important to take your weight loss goal seriously.

Try these 5 tips to avoid losing sight of your goal:

- **Weighing in.** One of the best motivators is to watch the numbers on your scale go down. Make sure you're weighing yourself on the same scale wearing the same or no clothing, and at the same time each day to avoid miscalculations.
- **Set milestones.** Don't just think about the end goal, set little milestones along the way to give yourself constant motivation to keep going with your weight loss plan.
- **Keep records.** Setbacks happen, and it's important to know if certain factors are making your weight loss more difficult. Keeping food diaries and making notes about events that may have impacted your weight loss are good ways to look back and see what may be causing you to stop losing or gain back some of the weight.
- **Reassess.** If your weight loss goal is a long process, make sure you take some time periodically to reflect on your current progress and see if any changes need to be made.
- **Reward yourself.** If your weight loss is going well, consider indulging in some of the benefits of losing weight – like shopping for some better fitting clothes!

HEALTHY RECIPE: CAULIFLOWER "RICE"

Cutting out carbs is one thing many people attempt for a New Year's diet change – but you don't have to throw out all your rice dish recipes yet! You can make "rice" out of a head of cauliflower and forget the grains!

- 1 head raw cauliflower, cut into florets
- 1 minced shallot
- 1 tsp. minced garlic
- 2 Tbsp. coconut, peanut or sesame oil
- 3 cups low-sodium chicken stock

Place the cauliflower in a food processor and pulse until it resembles rice-sized pieces.

Heat oil in a large stock pot and sauté the shallot and garlic for 2-3 minutes over medium-high heat. Add the cauliflower and sauté for another 3-5 minutes, stirring constantly.

Add the chicken stock and bring to a boil until most of the liquid has evaporated. Turn heat down to low and simmer uncovered for another 20 minutes, fluffing the "rice" occasionally until all liquid is absorbed. Serve just like regular rice!