

LAVAN & NEIDENBERG NEWSLETTER

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Changes to Social Security Benefits in 2012

Your Social Security benefits may be affected

Get ready to ring in the New Year by learning all about the biggest changes enacted by the Social Security Administration (SSA) in 2011. Are you going to be impacted? Read on to find out!

COLA Will Increase Monthly Social Security Benefits

In October 2011, the SSA announced the first Cost Of Living Adjustment (COLA) in several years. This automatic increase will add an additional 3.6% to your monthly Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. Your monthly payments should reflect this increase beginning Dec. 30, 2011.

New Conditions Added to Compassionate Allowances

An additional 13 seriously disabling conditions were added to the list of compassionate allowances in October. This brings the total number to 113 disorders and diseases that may qualify for immediate disability benefits.

The 13 new conditions include:

- Malignant Multiple Sclerosis;
- Paraneoplastic Pemphigus;
- Multicentric Castleman Disease;
- Pulmonary Kaposi Sarcoma;
- Primary Central Nervous System Lymphoma;
- Primary Effusion Lymphoma;
- Angelman Syndrome;
- Lewy Body Dementia;
- Lowe Syndrome;
- Corticobasal Degeneration;
- Multiple System Atrophy;
- Progressive Supranuclear Palsy; and
- The ALS/Parkinsonism Dementia Complex.

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The SSA Debuts a New Spanish Language Web Service

To help expand the SSA's services to the Spanish-speaking population a new website was rolled out on Nov. 15, 2011. Segurosocial.gov not only provides the same popular online services as the regular SSA.gov website, but also hosts all of the translated forms and applications necessary for applying for benefits.

The new website is being promoted by notable actor Don Francisco, similar to the ad campaigns featuring Patty Duke and George Takei. More features are being added on a regular basis and mirror the content found on the English language site, so all applicants have the same level of access.

Make Sure You're Ready For 2012

If you are already a recipient of Social Security benefits of any kind, you may contact your local Social Security office to request an explanation of your benefits. You have the right to know about any changes to your monthly payments.

If you are a new applicant who may qualify under one of the recently added compassionate allowances, remember that 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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International Day of Persons with Disabilities

December 3 is a day to recognize the disabled

The “International Day of Disabled Persons” – created by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1992 – is a day to promote awareness and understanding of disability issues. The internationally-recognized day is Saturday, Dec. 3.

2011 Theme: “Together for a better world for all: Including persons with disabilities in development”

This year’s theme focuses on the issues of discrimination and the stigmatization faced by many disabled persons. Historically, disabled individuals have struggled with unfair treatment in critical aspects of life such as employment, housing, and medical care.

The theme of the 2011 International Day of Disabled Persons addresses these challenges and encourages participants to seek out ways to end this discrimination. As many communities are experiencing revitalization and new urban development, leaders are stressing that they seek to improve facility accessibility and the fair treatment of disabled residents.

There is also a focus on the development of new empowerment programs, assistance services, and employment opportunities for disabled individuals. **Some of the suggested sub-themes include:**

- **mainstreaming disability;**
- **including children and youth with disabilities in development;**
- **accessibility; and**
- **promoting data collection and statistics on disability.**

Celebrating International Day of Disabled Persons

Many events related to promoting disability-friendly development will be taking place at the UN headquarters including panel discussions and the Enable Film Festival.

Global initiatives are also taking place, including forums on aid effectiveness, and several organized “flash mobs” in cities like Vienna and Prague which hope to draw attention to the special day.

Several countries that participate in the UN will be holding individual initiatives in their capitols and major cities. In the United States, [Variety the Children’s Charity](#) is hosting tents in major U.S. cities where they’ll be providing specially outfitted bicycles for disabled children. For more information, visit their website and take part in your area!

VETERANS CHARITY FUNDRAISER

Care for Disabled Veterans charity poker tournament

On Veterans Day weekend Care for Disabled Veterans of South Florida held a 2-day charity event to honor and support disabled veterans and their families.

The festivities began on Veterans Day evening with a dinner honoring veterans of all branches of the U.S. military, held at the historic Dania Jai-Alai. The event drew a crowd of veterans from all across South Florida and brought together their families and friends for a great night of food and live DJ entertainment.

During the evening a silent auction offered a chance to bid on gifts from hot air balloon rides to sporting event tickets and autographed memorabilia. Attendees could also enter into the 50/50 raffle for cash prizes.

The fun continued Saturday with an All-in for Vets Charity Poker Tournament, where participants played their way to victory. The top 4 winners of the night were Andy Martin, George Aladro, Andy Gessner, and overall winner Vincent Santaniello.

The Law Offices of LaVan & Neidenberg, P.A. encourage organizations like Care for Disabled Veterans in their ongoing efforts to help our deserving veterans!

HEALTH NEWS

FDA Revokes Approval of Avastin for Breast Cancer

Once a last-resort treatment option for many breast cancer patients, Avastin has now been deemed unsafe by the FDA.

Treatment with Avastin has been a costly and risky venture for many patients, often creating expenses of more than \$80,000 a year. Some of the **serious and sometimes fatal side effects that the FDA could no longer overlook include:**

- **severe high-blood pressure;**
- **massive bleeding;**
- **increased risk of heart attack or failure; and**
- **tears in the stomach or intestines.**

Even though the approval for use in treating breast cancer has been revoked, Avastin remains on the market to treat other diseases such as colon, lung, brain, and kidney cancers.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

December ends the year with several winter holidays as the temperatures continue to drop. We hope that you have the opportunity to spend this month with good friends, family, and festivities!

PEARL HARBOR DAY – WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2011

On this day in 1941 the U.S. suffered one of the most devastating losses of military and civilian life on U.S. soil. This attack was one of the turning points of World War II and on this day every year we take time to honor those lost.

INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S DAY – SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2011

A joint initiative between UNICEF and the International Academy of Television Arts & Sciences celebrates children on the second Sunday in December. TV broadcasters are encouraged to “tune in to kids” and provide child-friendly programming during this day.

BAKE COOKIES DAY – SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2011

The holiday season is typically filled with baked goods and cookies are a classic staple of many winter holidays. You don't need to be celebrating a specific religion or event – just bake some cookies! Share them with friends and family and spread a little holiday cheer!

CHANUKAH – DECEMBER 20-28, 2011

Chanukah festivities begin at sundown on Sunday the 20th and continue until sundown on the 28th. The traditions include the lighting of the menorah, special meals and blessings, and many families exchange gifts each night.

FESTIVUS HOLIDAY – WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2011

Made famous by the TV show “Seinfeld,” Festivus is known as the holiday “for the rest of us” in reference to those who don't particularly celebrate the popular winter holidays. The holiday is celebrated with a “Festivus Pole” instead of a tree, the suggested dinner is meatloaf, and the night is capped off with “feats of strength.”

CHRISTMAS DAY – SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2011

Christmas Day is celebrated in many ways across the globe, but its beginning is attributed to the Romans as early as the 4th century. This holiday is often a time for families to gather and exchange gifts, eat hearty meals, and attend special church services to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

NEW YEAR'S EVE – SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2011

This celebration is the final day of the year where many of us take the time to reflect on the past 364 days. Now is the time to be thankful for a good year and wish for another great 365 days to come! Start making your new year's resolutions and watch the ball drop over Times Square.

Fast 5 for Your Holidays

5 tips to avoid holiday overindulgence

The winter holidays are typically times of good friends, family, and food. With all of the holiday goodies, buffets, big dinners, and parties it's easy to let your appetite (and your waistline!) get away from you.

Try these 5 tips to control cravings and avoid overeating:

- **Cut back on the extras.** Skip the whipped cream on that apple pie, and go light on the gravy. There's often a lot of extra fat, sugar, and calories in the condiments of your favorite foods.
- **Don't sample it all.** Buffet-style meals are dangerous when you feel like you have to try a little of everything. Focus on healthier dishes, and only eat it if it's an absolute favorite.
- **Don't skip meals.** “Saving up” your caloric intake for a big meal is bad practice. It leads to overeating and little time left in the day to burn off all those high-calorie goodies.
- **Take breaks.** Holiday gatherings aren't all about grazing the buffet table. Take time out to visit with guests or play a game, especially if the weather allows outdoor sports.
- **Drink smart.** Alternate alcoholic drinks with a non-alcoholic choice to avoid going overboard. Also, drinking more water will help balance out the alcohol, keep you feeling full and curb your cravings for the snack table.

HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS

Safety can often be overlooked during the hectic winter holidays. To keep your family safe, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends some holiday safety tips:

- **Be fire safe** – Never leave candles or lanterns unattended, especially with children or pets in the area. Check that you've extinguished all open flames before turning in for the night!
- **Check lights** – You haven't touched your holiday lights since last year, and storage can damage cords and bulbs. Never use frayed cords or loose bulbs and replace old sets when cracks are visible.
- **Prepare for vacation** – If leaving your home for an extended period of time make sure all your utilities and appliances are in working condition. Ask a trusted friend or neighbor to keep an eye on your property, and if leaving for more than a week or two, you may want to alert your local police station that you'll be out of town.