

Receiving the Most Out of Social Security

From time to time, our relationship with a client creates a unique story. Sharing a “case study” from time to time may help to describe outside the box ways we add value for our clients.

A client, “Sally” (not her real name) who engaged us several years ago recently was divorced from her second husband. As a normal part of our process, we asked her to send us her tax return so we could analyze it.

Her tax return showed her receiving approximately \$5,100/year in Social Security benefits. Asking questions to gain more insight, we learned that this amount was not based off of her own Social Security record. The Social Security amount determined was from her second husband who had owned his own business and declared a small amount of W-2 income. This resulted in his Primary Insurance Amount (PIA) being much smaller than a typical W-2 worker. Sally’s annual Social Security amount was half of her ex-second husband’s Social Security benefit.

Is there any way Sally could receive a greater Social Security benefit?

We asked Sally if she had been married to her 1st husband for at least 10 years. To which, she responded yes. He worked at a bank, but he did not own the bank. He was an employee for the bank. All his income was reported on his W-2, and he had compiled a much higher PIA amount than her second husband. By learning more about Sally personally as well as her marriage history, we shared with her the potential of having her own Social Security amount increase, but more homework needed to be completed to make sure.

We joined Sally on a visit to the social security office in Gainesville, GA. We suggested she take with her the marriage certificate and divorce decree from her first marriage. Two weeks after we met with a social security representative, Sally’s annual benefit increased to over \$11,000/year.

What made this possible?

- Sally had been married at least 10 years, allowing her access to the “record” of a former spouse.
- Sally was over the age of 62, and not currently married.
- Her first husband’s PIA was significantly higher than her second husband and therefore her benefit was increased correspondingly. She was able to claim up to 50% of either of her ex-husband’s benefits.

If the above made you think of someone you know, or someone who could potentially benefit from our services we would enjoy meeting them. We would love to be a sounding board for your family and friends. If any of them should need a second opinion on their financial situation, introduce them to www.striblingwhalen.com or call us at 678-989-0048.

Source:

<https://www.investopedia.com/ask/answers/081815/can-divorced-woman-collect-social-security-her-exhusband.asp>