

## ***The Freedom to Apply Online***

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Every American knows that July 4th is Independence Day — a day for celebrating our nation’s independence and the freedoms enjoyed by all Americans.

So on July 4th, and throughout the year, it makes sense that independent-minded Americans tend to be do-it-yourselfers. We revel in the freedom to make our own choices and to do things on our own schedule, in our own way.

When you’re done grilling those burgers and hotdogs and watching the neighborhood fireworks display, remember that “do-it-yourself” does not apply only to building bookshelves, rummaging underneath the sink, and changing your car’s oil. You can also exercise your right to do things yourself, when you want and how you want, by visiting [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov).

To apply for retirement benefits, you can complete your application online from the comfort of your own home or office. There are no paper forms to sign, and usually no additional documents are required.

In fact, what used to take an hour or more can be done online in as little as 15 minutes. In less time than it takes to read the instructions on a you-build-it picnic table, your Social Security retirement application can be completed and submitted for processing.

Not ready to retire? Regardless of your age or how far away retirement may seem, it’s never too early to begin planning. Take a look at your financial future by visiting our helpful Retirement Estimator at [www.socialsecurity.gov/estimator](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/estimator). The online tool uses your earnings record along with information that you key in to give you a quick estimate of your future benefits.

So this 4th of July, after you’ve enjoyed the picnic and fireworks, continue to celebrate your freedom to do it yourself by going online to [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov).

And happy Independence Day from Social Security.