US011455692B2

(12) **United States Patent**
**Nichols et al.**

(10) **Patent No.: US 11,455,692 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent: *Sep. 27, 2022**

(54) **SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS ESTIMATOR FOR MARRIED COUPLES**

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(73) Assignee: **BLACKROCK, INC.**, New York, NY (US)

( * ) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 277 days.

This patent is subject to a terminal disclaimer.

(21) Appl. No.: **16/867,169**

(22) Filed: **May 5, 2020**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2020/0265524 A1 Aug. 20, 2020

**Related U.S. Application Data**

(63) Continuation of application No. 12/604,326, filed on Oct. 22, 2009, now Pat. No. 10,650,458.

(51) **Int. Cl.**
***G06Q 40/08*** (2012.01)
***G06Q 40/06*** (2012.01)
(Continued)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC ..... ***G06Q 40/08*** (2013.01); ***G06Q 40/00*** (2013.01); ***G06Q 40/02*** (2013.01); ***G06Q 40/06*** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
CPC ..... G06Q 40/08; G06Q 40/00; G06Q 40/06; G06Q 40/02
See application file for complete search history.

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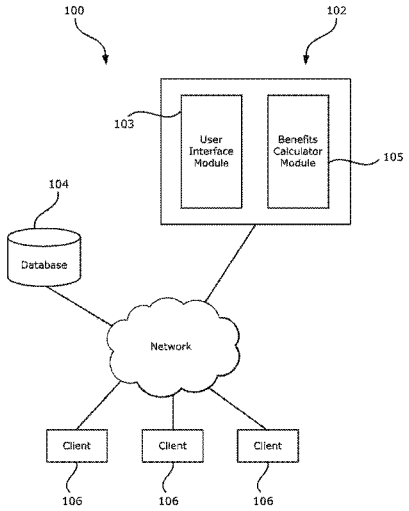
*Primary Examiner* — I Jung Liu
(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Haynes and Boone, LLP

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A system for calculating estimated Social Security benefits for married couples. The system includes a benefits estimator server configured to automatically update to reflect a change in rules regarding a calculation of Social Security benefits; a rules database separate from but coupled to the benefits estimate server via a network; and a calculator configured to receive input data and to receive social security calculation rules from the rules database and further configured to transmit output data, via the benefits estimator server, based on the input data and the social security calculation rules, wherein the input data includes data regarding a primary earner and a secondary earner in the married couple, including an assumed age of death for the primary earner and an assumed age of death for the secondary earner, and wherein the output data includes benefits for a plurality of Social Security benefits categories for the married couple.

**20 Claims, 8 Drawing Sheets**



(51) **Int. Cl.**
***G06Q 40/02*** (2012.01)
***G06Q 40/00*** (2012.01)

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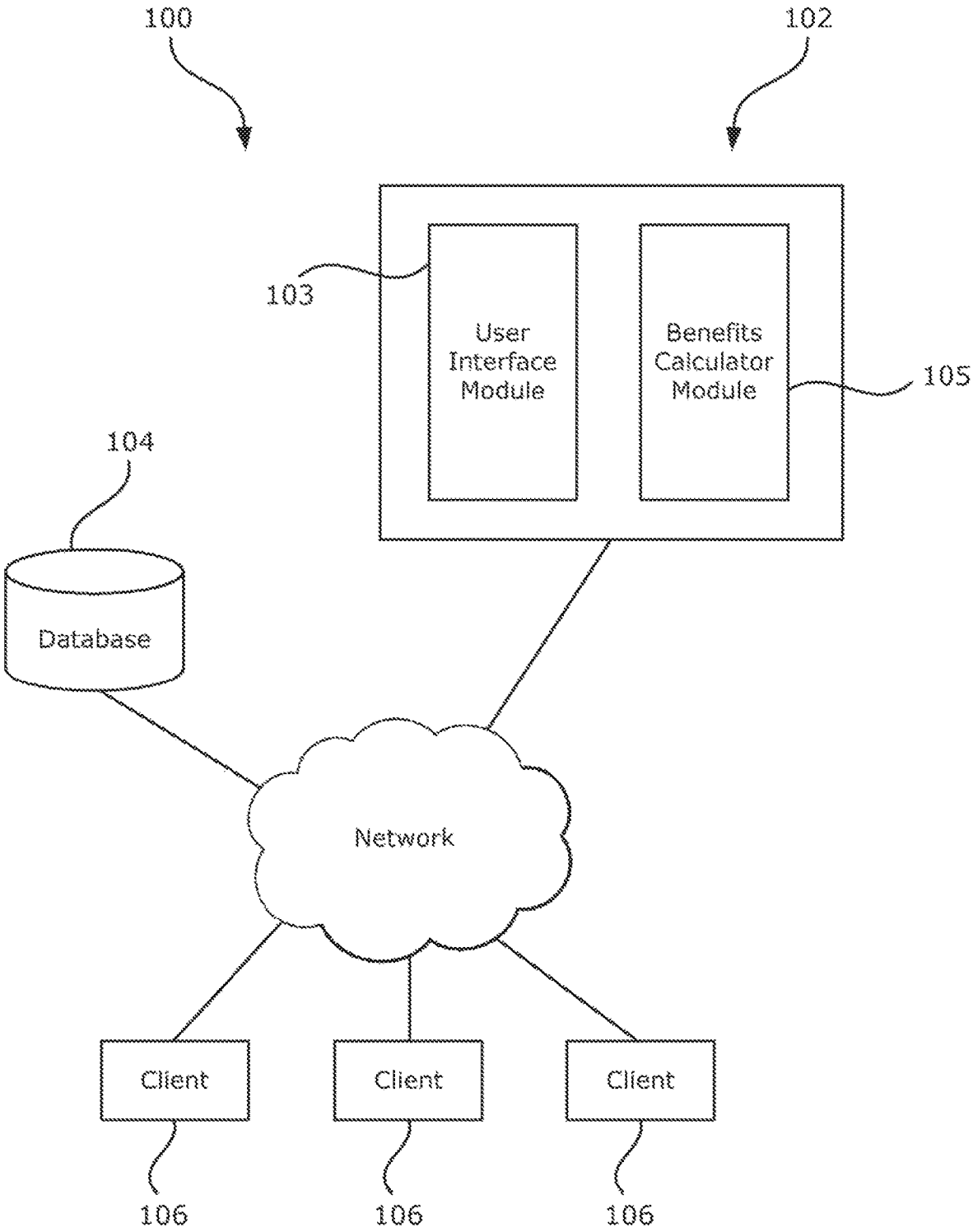
100
102
103
User Interface Module
Benefits Calculator Module
105
104
Database
Network
Client
Client
Client
106
106
106

Fig. 1

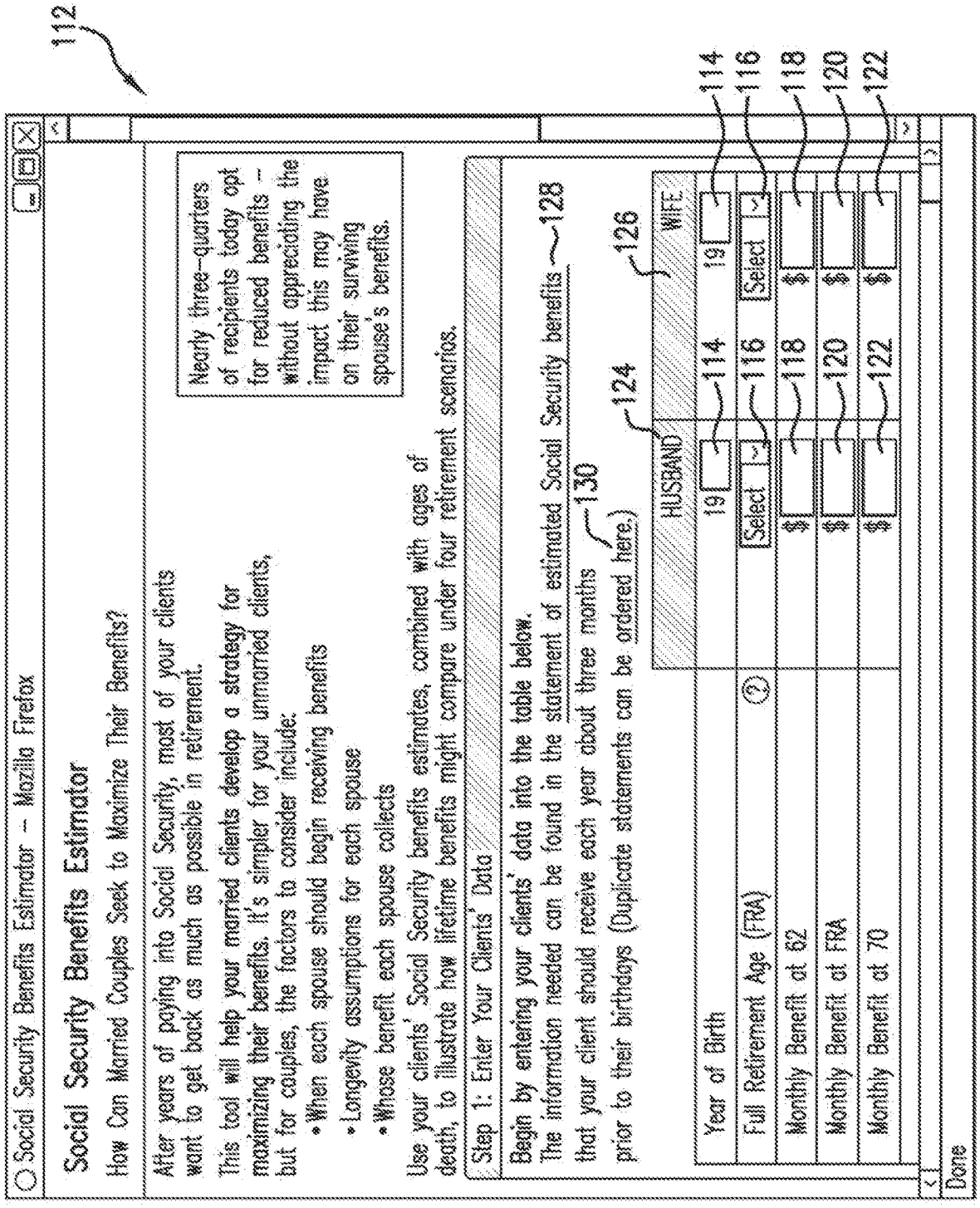
112
Social Security Benefits Estimator – Mozilla Firefox
Social Security Benefits Estimator
How Can Married Couples Seek to Maximize Their Benefits?
After years of paying into Social Security, most of your clients want to get back as much as possible in retirement.
This tool will help your married clients develop a strategy for maximizing their benefits. It's simpler for your unmarried clients, but for couples, the factors to consider include:
• When each spouse should begin receiving benefits
• Longevity assumptions for each spouse
• Whose benefit each spouse collects
Use your clients' Social Security benefits estimates, combined with ages of death, to illustrate how lifetime benefits might compare under four retirement scenarios.
Nearly three-quarters of recipients today opt for reduced benefits – without appreciating the impact this may have on their surviving spouse's benefits.
Step 1: Enter Your Clients' Data
Begin by entering your clients' data into the table below.
The information needed can be found in the statement of estimated Social Security benefits
that your client should receive each year about three months
prior to their birthdays (Duplicate statements can be ordered here.)
128
130
124
126
HUSBAND
WIFE
Year of Birth
19
19
114
114
Full Retirement Age (FRA)
Select
Select
116
116
Monthly Benefit at 62
$
$
118
118
Monthly Benefit at FRA
$
$
120
120
Monthly Benefit at 70
$
$
122
122
Done

FIG. 2

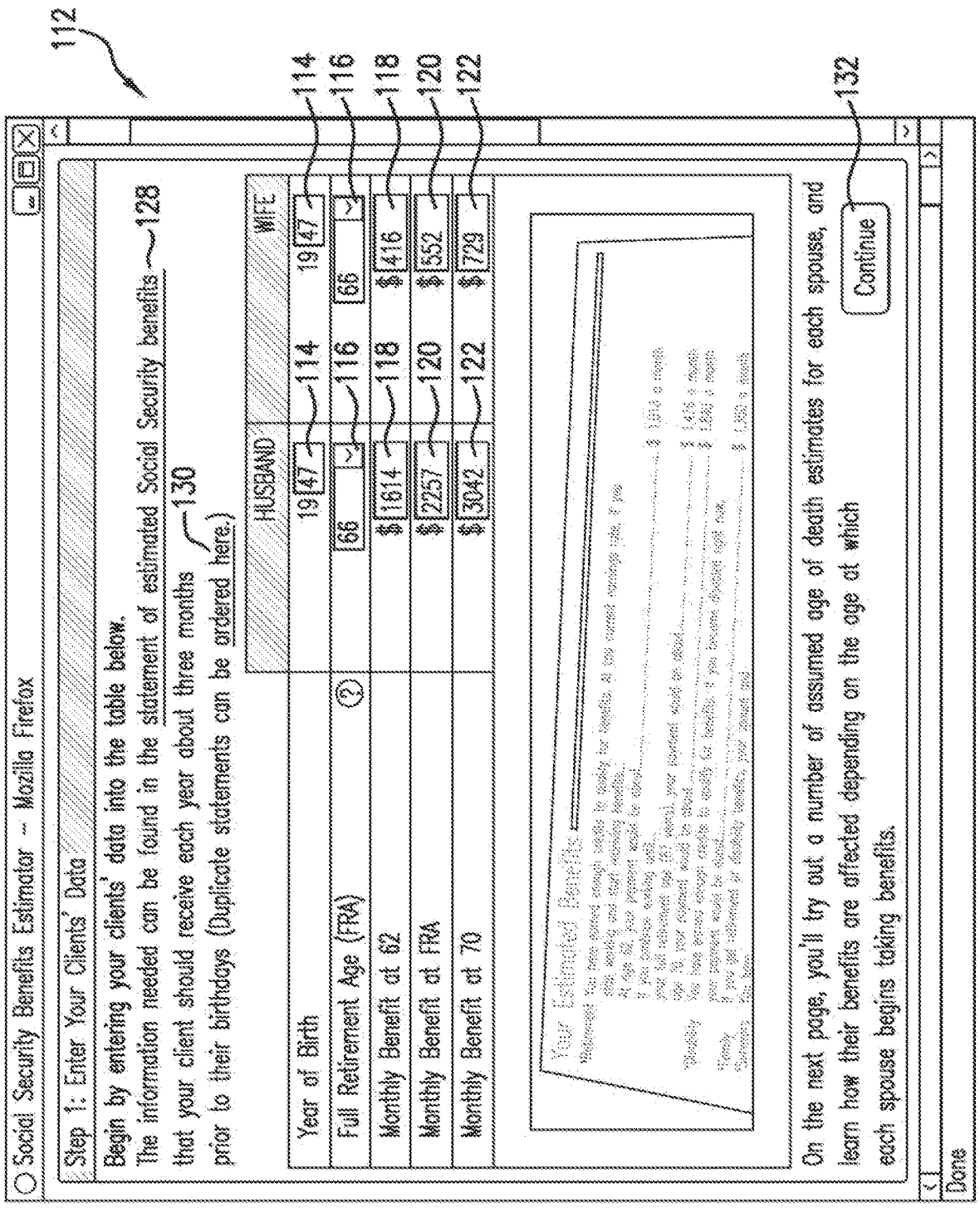
112
Social Security Benefits Estimator – Mozilla Firefox
Step 1: Enter Your Clients' Data
Begin by entering your clients' data into the table below.
The information needed can be found in the statement of estimated Social Security benefits
128
that your client should receive each year about three months
130
prior to their birthdays (Duplicate statements can be ordered here.)
HUSBAND
WIFE
Year of Birth
19 47
114
19 47
Full Retirement Age (FRA)
66
116
66
Monthly Benefit at 62
$ 1614
118
$ 1416
Monthly Benefit at FRA
$ 2257
120
$ 552
Monthly Benefit at 70
$ 3042
122
$ 729
Your Estimated Benefits
On the next page, you'll try out a number of assumed age of death estimates for each spouse, and
learn how their benefits are affected depending on the age at which
each spouse begins taking benefits.
Continue
132
Done

FIG. 3

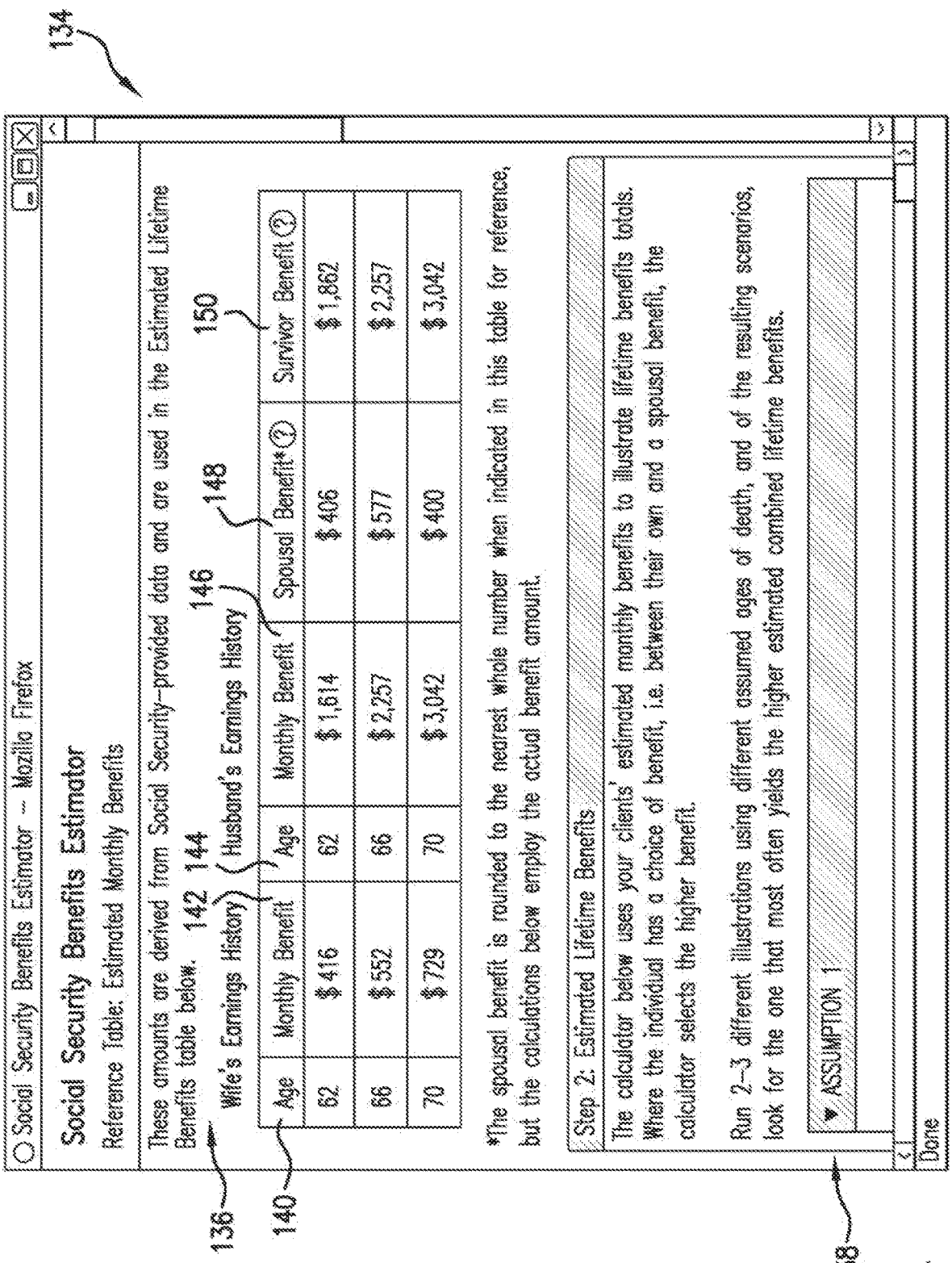
134
Social Security Benefits Estimator – Mozilla Firefox
Social Security Benefits Estimator
Reference Table: Estimated Monthly Benefits
These amounts are derived from Social Security–provided data and are used in the Estimated Lifetime Benefits table below.
142
144
146
148
150
Wife's Earnings History
Husband's Earnings History
Age
Monthly Benefit
Age
Monthly Benefit
Spousal Benefit*
Survivor Benefit
62
$416
62
$1,614
$406
$1,862
66
$532
66
$2,257
$577
$2,257
70
$729
70
$3,042
$400
$3,042
*The spousal benefit is rounded to the nearest whole number when indicated in this table for reference, but the calculations below employ the actual benefit amount.
Step 2: Estimated Lifetime Benefits
The calculator below uses your clients' estimated monthly benefits to illustrate lifetime benefits totals. Where the individual has a choice of benefit, i.e. between their own and a spousal benefit, the calculator selects the higher benefit.
Run 2–3 different illustrations using different assumed ages of death, and of the resulting scenarios, look for the one that most often yields the higher estimated combined lifetime benefits.
ASSUMPTION 1
Done
136
140
138

FIG. 4

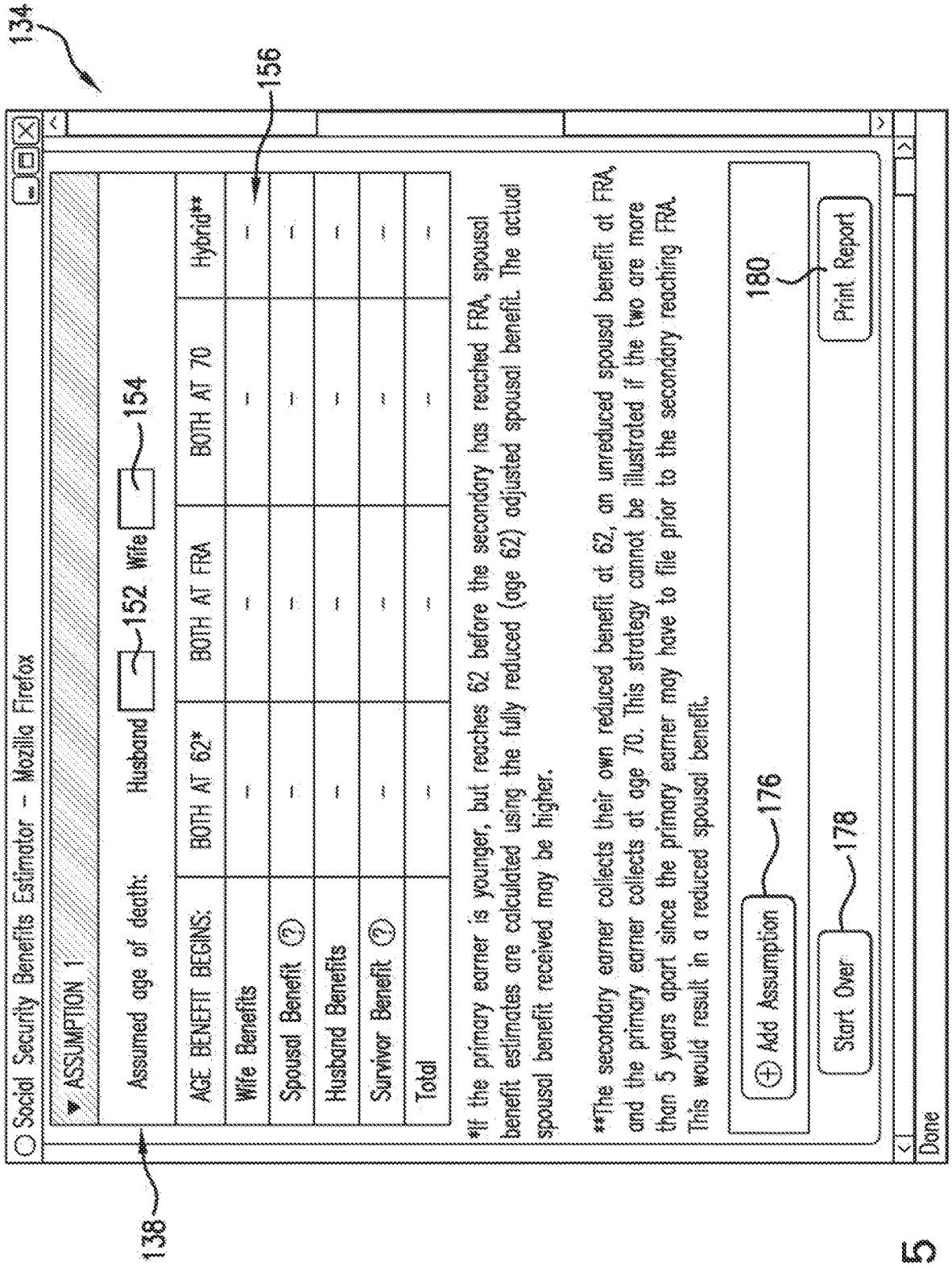
134
156
Social Security Benefits Estimator – Mozilla Firefox
ASSUMPTION 1
Assumed age of death:
Husband
152
Wife
154
AGE BENEFIT BEGINS:
BOTH AT 62*
BOTH AT FRA
BOTH AT 70
Hybrid**
Wife Benefits
Spousal Benefit
Husband Benefits
Survivor Benefit
Total
*If the primary earner is younger, but reaches 62 before the secondary has reached FRA, spousal benefit estimates are calculated using the fully reduced (age 62) adjusted spousal benefit. The actual spousal benefit received may be higher.
**The secondary earner collects their own reduced benefit at 62, an unreduced spousal benefit at FRA, and the primary earner collects at age 70. This strategy cannot be illustrated if the two are more than 5 years apart since the primary earner may have to file prior to the secondary reaching FRA. This would result in a reduced spousal benefit.
Add Assumption
176
180
Print Report
Start Over
178
138
Done

FIG. 5

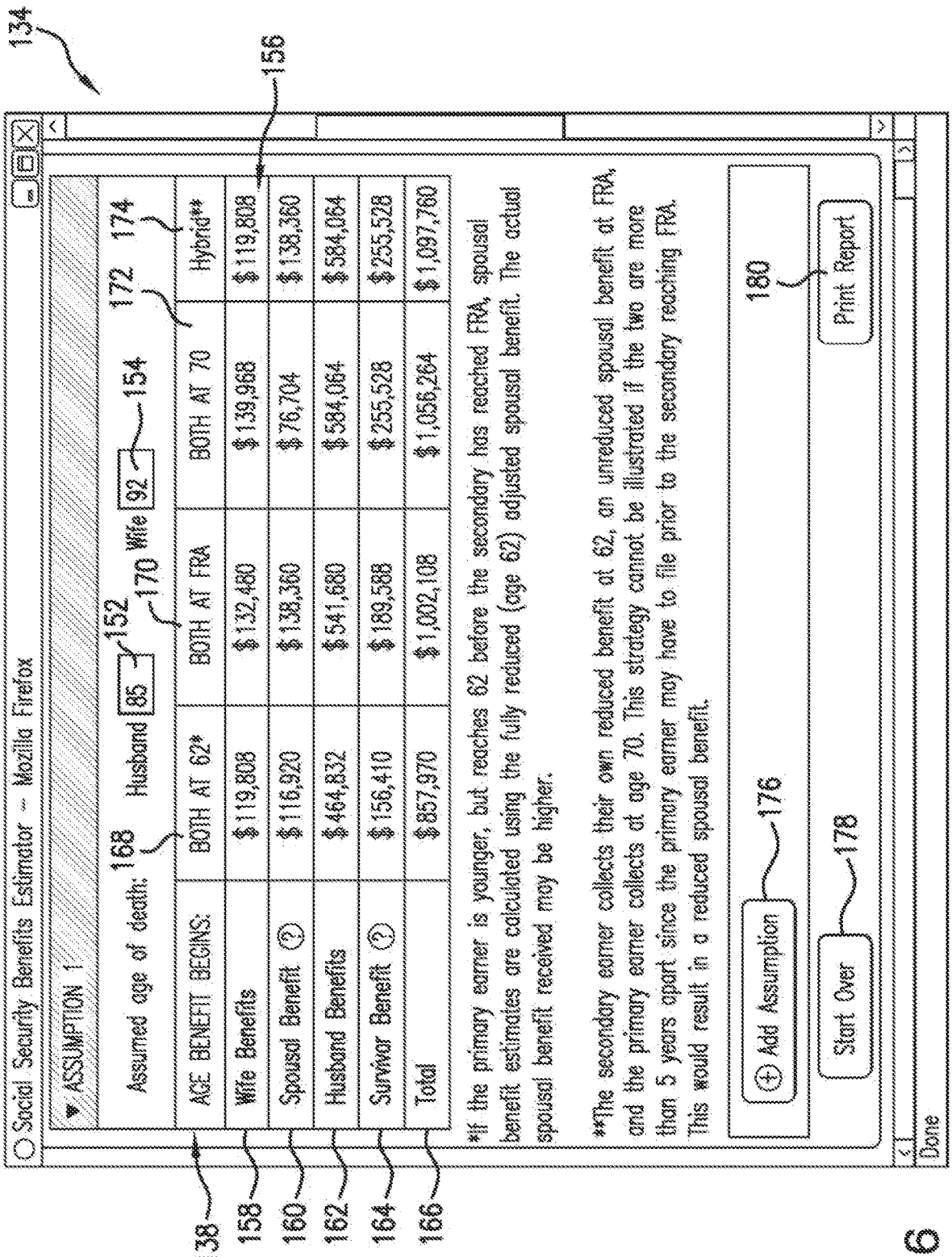
134
Social Security Benefits Estimator – Mozilla Firefox
ASSUMPTION 1
Assumed age of death: 168
Husband 85 152
170 Wife 92 154
156
AGE BENEFIT BEGINS: | BOTH AT 62* | BOTH AT FRA | BOTH AT 70 | Hybrid**
Wife Benefits | $119,808 | $132,480 | $139,968 | $119,808
Spousal Benefit | $116,920 | $138,360 | $76,704 | $138,360
Husband Benefits | $464,832 | $541,680 | $584,064 | $584,064
Survivor Benefit | $156,410 | $189,588 | $255,528 | $255,528
Total | $857,970 | $1,002,108 | $1,056,264 | $1,097,760
172 174
*If the primary earner is younger, but reaches 62 before the secondary has reached FRA, spousal benefit estimates are calculated using the fully reduced (age 62) adjusted spousal benefit. The actual spousal benefit received may be higher.
**The secondary earner collects their own reduced benefit at 62, an unreduced spousal benefit at FRA, and the primary earner collects at age 70. This strategy cannot be illustrated if the two are more than 5 years apart since the primary earner may have to file prior to the secondary reaching FRA. This would result in a reduced spousal benefit.
Add Assumption 176
180
Start Over 178
Print Report
Done
138
158
160
162
164
166

FIG. 6

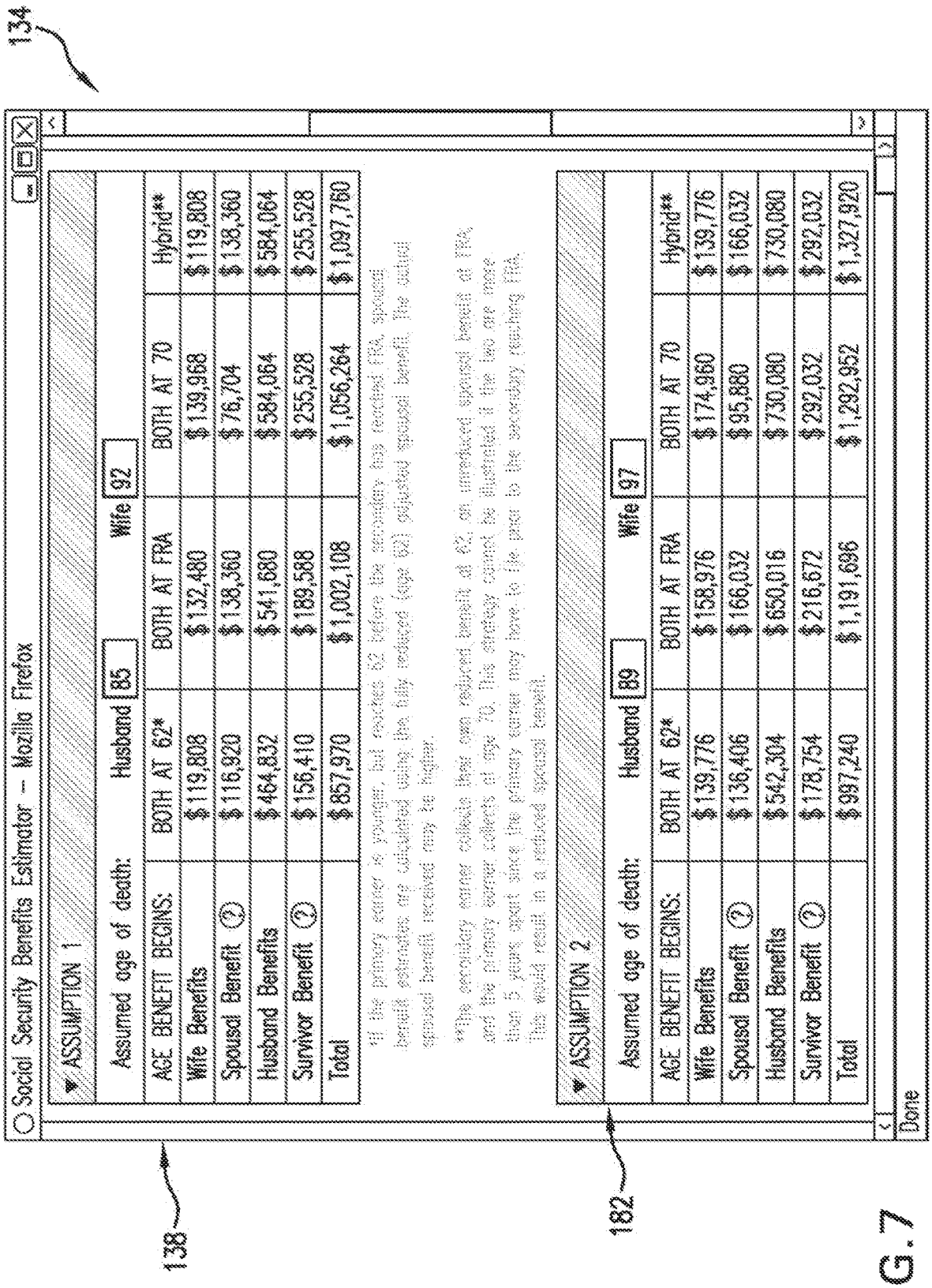
134
Social Security Benefits Estimator – Mozilla Firefox
ASSUMPTION 1
Assumed age of death: Husband 85 Wife 92
AGE BENEFIT BEGINS: BOTH AT 62* BOTH AT FRA BOTH AT 70 Hybrid**
Wife Benefits $119,808 $132,480 $139,968 $119,808
Spousal Benefit ⓘ $116,920 $138,360 $76,704 $138,360
Husband Benefits $464,832 $541,680 $584,064 $584,064
Survivor Benefit ⓘ $156,410 $189,588 $255,528 $255,528
Total $857,970 $1,002,108 $1,056,264 $1,097,760
*If the primary earner is younger, but reaches 62 before the secondary has reached FRA, spousal benefit calculated using the fully reduced (age 62) adjusted spousal benefit. The actual spousal benefit received may be higher.
**The secondary earner collects their own reduced benefit at 62, an unreduced spousal benefit at FRA, and the primary earner collects at age 70. This strategy cannot be illustrated if the two are more than 5 years apart since the primary earner may have to file prior to the secondary reaching FRA. This would result in a reduced spousal benefit.
ASSUMPTION 2
Assumed age of death: Husband 89 Wife 97
AGE BENEFIT BEGINS: BOTH AT 62* BOTH AT FRA BOTH AT 70 Hybrid**
Wife Benefits $139,776 $158,976 $174,960 $139,776
Spousal Benefit ⓘ $136,406 $166,032 $95,880 $166,032
Husband Benefits $542,304 $650,016 $730,080 $730,080
Survivor Benefit ⓘ $178,754 $216,672 $292,032 $292,032
Total $997,240 $1,191,696 $1,292,952 $1,327,920
Done
138
182

FIG. 7

Social Security Benefits Estimator

## SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS FOR YOU AND YOUR SPOUSE

Nearly three-quarters of recipients today opt for reduced benefits—not appreciating the impact this may have on their surviving spouse's benefits. The monthly benefits are derived from data entered from your Social Security statement, and are used in the Estimated Lifetime Benefits below

REFERENCE TABLE: ESTIMATED MONTHLY BENEFITS

Wife's Estimated Benefits

| Age Benefit Begins | Monthly Benefit |
|---|---|
| 62 | $ 416 |
| 66 | $ 552 |
| 70 | $ 729 |

Husband's Estimated Benefits

| Age Benefit Begins | Monthly Benefit | Adjusted Spousal Benefit [1] | Survivor Benefit |
|---|---|---|---|
| 62 | $ 1,614 | $ 406 | $ 1,862 |
| 66 | $ 2,257 | $ 577 | $ 2,257 |
| 70 | $ 3,042 | $ 400 | $ 3,042 |

ESTIMATED LIFETIME BENEFITS

The table below uses estimated monthly benefits to illustrate lifetime benefit totals under four different scenarios. Where you have a choice of benefit, i.e. between your own and a spousal benefit, the illustration uses the higher benefit. By looking at 2–3 different illustrations, using different age of death assumptions, you'll get a feel for the scenario that most often yields the higher totals.

ESTIMATED LIFETIME BENEFITS ASSUMPTION ONE: AGES OF DEATH: HUSBAND 85, WIFE 92

| Age Benefit Begins | Both Age 62 [2] | Both Begin at FRA | Both Age 70 | Hybrid [3] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Wife's Benefit | $ 119,808 | $ 132,480 | $ 139,968 | $ 119,808 |
| Spousal Benefit | $ 116,920 | $ 138,360 | $ 76,704 | $ 138,360 |
| Husband's Benefit | $ 464,832 | $ 541,680 | $ 584,064 | $ 584,064 |
| Survivor Benefit | $ 156,410 | $ 189,588 | $ 255,528 | $ 255,528 |
| TOTAL BENEFIT RECEIVED | $ 857,970 | $ 1,002,108 | $ 1,056,264 | $ 1,097,760 |

FIG. 8

# SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS ESTIMATOR FOR MARRIED COUPLES

## CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/604,326, filed Oct. 22, 2009 which is incorporated by reference herein in its entirety.

## COPYRIGHT NOTICE



## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

### Field of the Invention

The present invention is directed to systems and methods for calculating estimated Social Security benefits. More specifically, the present invention is directed to systems and methods for determining the optimal approach a married couple should take to maximize Social Security benefits, including spousal and survivor benefits.

### Background of the Related Art

In the United States, individuals who work and pay Social Security taxes for a prescribed number of years are entitled to receive their full Social Security retirement benefits when they reach full retirement age. Workers earn a credit for each quarter that they work and pay Social Security taxes, and retirement benefits are available to individuals who have earned at least 40 credits, meaning that they have worked and paid taxes for at least 10 years. Full retirement age ranges from 65 to 67 depending on the recipient's year of birth. For example, full retirement age for an individual born in 1954 is 66 years old, while full retirement age for an individual born in 1960 or later is 67 years old. When individuals reach their full retirement age, they are entitled to their primary insurance amount. An individual's primary insurance amount is based on the 35 years of employment during which he or she earned the highest salary.

Social Security retirement benefits can be claimed as early as age 62, although the benefit will be reduced by 20 to 30 percent depending on the individual's full retirement age. The Social Security Administration also offers deferred retirement credits to those who postpone collecting their benefits beyond their full retirement age. For every year beyond full retirement age that payments are put off, the Social Security Administration provides a guaranteed annual increase of 7 to 8 percent, depending on year of birth, to the individual's primary insurance amount. This is in addition to the annual cost of living adjustment to benefits.

In addition to their own benefits, individuals may also be eligible for spousal and survivor benefits. For a married couple, the Social Security Administration designates a primary earner and a secondary earner. The primary earner is defined as the spouse in the married couple having the higher primary insurance amount, or in other words, the higher monthly benefit. The secondary earner is defined as the spouse in the married couple having the lower primary insurance amount, or in other words, the lower monthly benefit.



While both spouses are living, the secondary earner is entitled to spousal benefits equal to 50 percent of the primary earner's primary insurance amount provided the primary earner has filed for benefits. If the secondary earner is also entitled to his or her own benefit, the individual benefit will pay first and the spousal benefit will make up the difference between that and 50% of the spouse's primary insurance amount. For example, if the primary earner had a primary insurance amount of $2,000, the secondary earner would be entitled to a spousal benefit of $1,000 at full retirement age. Assuming a primary insurance amount of $750 for the secondary earner, he or she would receive both the primary insurance amount payment of $750 and a spousal benefit payment of $250 to bring the total combined benefit to $1,000. If spousal benefits are collected prior to a spouse's full retirement age, the spousal benefit may be permanently reduced.

In the event that the primary earner dies first, the secondary earner may be entitled to survivor benefits. Survivor benefits will be at least equal to the primary earner's actual benefit at the time of death. If the primary earner dies before filing for benefits, the Social Security Administration will calculate the primary insurance amount for the decedent using the best 35 years of earnings as of the year of death. A surviving spouse can collect a survivor benefit as young as age 60, subject to a reduction. The decision by the primary earner concerning when to collect his or her individual Social Security benefits, whether it be at age 62, at full retirement age, at age 70, or somewhere in between these ages, has a direct impact on any survivor benefit that may be paid to the surviving spouse.

Given the many factors that must be taken into account, determining when and how to collect Social Security retirement benefits so as to optimize the benefits received as a married couple can be a difficult task. Accordingly, there is a need for systems and methods for determining the optimal approach for receiving Social Security benefits for married couples.

## SUMMARY

One or more embodiments include a system for calculating estimated Social Security benefits for married couples. The system includes: a server; a display device connected to the server; a user interface module running on the server, the user interface module being configured to receive input from a user and to display content on the display device; and a benefits calculator module running on the server and being configured to receive input data from the user interface module and to output data to the display device. The input data includes data regarding a married couple, including the assumed age of death for both the primary earner and the secondary earner. The system may output an estimated lifetime benefit using a hybrid approach wherein the secondary earner collects a reduced benefit at age 62 and a spousal benefit at full retirement age, and wherein the primary earner collects benefits at age 70.

A method for calculating estimated lifetime Social Security benefits for a married couple is also disclosed. The method includes the steps of receiving data from a user at a benefits estimator server, the data including data regarding both a primary earner and a secondary earner in a married couple, including the assumed age of death for both the primary earner and the secondary earner; outputting data

from the benefits estimator server to a display device; and displaying the output data in the form of a table, with rows of data corresponding to the plurality of Social Security benefits and columns corresponding to a plurality of options the married couple has for receiving the Social Security benefits. The output data includes estimated lifetime benefits for a plurality of Social Security benefits categories for the married couple. The plurality of options includes a hybrid option with the secondary earner collecting a reduced benefit at age 62 and a spousal benefit at full retirement age, and the primary earner deferring the collection of benefits until age 70.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

So that those skilled in the art to which the subject invention pertains will readily understand how to implement the systems and methods for calculating estimated Social Security benefits for married couples, without undue experimentation, preferred embodiments of the system and methods will be described in detail below with reference to the following figures:

FIG. **1** is a schematic illustration of the system for calculating estimated Social Security benefits for married couples;

FIG. **2** is an exemplary embodiment of a portion of the user interface for the system of FIG. **1**, showing an initial data entry page;

FIG. **3** is an exemplary embodiment of a portion of the user interface for the system of FIG. **1**, showing an initial data entry page with data entered into various data fields;

FIG. **4** is an exemplary embodiment of a portion of the user interface for the system of FIG. **1**, showing the earnings history section of an estimated lifetime benefits page;

FIG. **5** is an exemplary embodiment of a portion of the user interface for the system of FIG. **1**, showing a blank estimated lifetime benefits table;

FIG. **6** is an exemplary embodiment of a portion of the user interface for the system of FIG. **1**, showing a populated estimated lifetime benefits table;

FIG. **7** is an exemplary embodiment of a portion of the user interface for the system of FIG. **1**, showing an additional populated estimated lifetime benefits table using different assumed ages of death for each spouse; and

FIG. **8** is an exemplary embodiment of an estimated lifetime benefits report generated by the system of FIG. **1**.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS

Reference will now be made in detail to the present embodiments of the systems and methods for calculating estimated Social Security benefits for married couples. The systems and methods described in this disclosure are particularly well-suited for financial advisors counseling their clients as to the optimal timing for receiving Social Security benefits. For unmarried individuals, the determination as to when to take Social Security is relatively straightforward. However, for married couples, there are additional factors that must be considered, including when each spouse should begin receiving benefits, longevity assumptions for each spouse, and whose benefit each spouse will collect. In one exemplary embodiment, the system includes functionality for calculating various benefits scenarios and displaying a report showing the results of each scenario, which can then be used when counseling clients concerning strategies for maximizing Social Security benefits. The report may include the results of a hybrid approach to collecting Social Security benefits, which may help a married couple maximize the payment of both individual benefits as well as spousal and survivor benefits.

In one exemplary embodiment, the hybrid approach includes the secondary earner claiming his or her benefits at age 62, his or her spousal benefit at full retirement age, and the primary earner deferring his or her receipt of benefits until age 70. This approach is particularly advantageous if the primary earner is older. If the primary earner is within five years of the secondary earner, the secondary earner would file at 62 and collect his or her individual benefit. When the secondary earner reaches full retirement age, the primary earner would file for benefits to allow spousal benefits to be paid, but suspend collecting until he or she reaches age 70. By filing for benefits when the secondary earner reaches full retirement age, the primary earner enables the spouse to collect an unreduced spousal benefit in addition to his or her reduced individual benefit. Deferring collection to age 70 allows for the highest possible benefit to be paid not only during the primary earner's lifetime, but also as a survivor benefit when the primary earner dies.

For purposes of explanation and illustration, and not limitation, an exemplary embodiment of a system in accordance with the present invention is shown in FIG. **1** and designated generally by the reference numeral **100**. System **100** includes a benefits estimator server computer **102**, a database **104**, and a plurality of client devices **106**. Database **104**, benefits estimator server **102**, and client devices **106** may interface with one another via a network **108**. Network **108** may be any suitable network, including a company intranet or other local area network, a wide area network, and the Internet. Server **102** may include a plurality of servers, and database **104** may include a plurality of databases. Client devices may include a computer, a mobile phone, or any other network-enabled device.

System **100** may comprise software components running on either benefits estimator server **102** or clients **106**. Server **102** and clients **106** may run any suitable operating system and may include a variety of hardware configurations. Both benefits estimator server **102** and clients **106** may include a processor coupled to a memory module and to a mass storage device via a bus or other communication medium; a display or other output device interfacing with the processor; and a keyboard, mouse, touchpad, or other input device that receives input from a user and interfaces with the processor. In one exemplary embodiment, clients **106** each include an input device for receiving user input and a display device for displaying content. The software implementing system **100** may include instructions written in a high level computer language and stored in a mass storage device. In one exemplary embodiment, a plurality of modules having distinct functions run on benefits estimator server **102**. For example, benefits estimator server **102** may include a user interface module **103** and a benefits calculator module **105**.

In one exemplary embodiment, server **102** is a secure server requiring authentication from a user prior to allowing access to system **100**. For example, upon receiving a request from a web browser running on client **106**, server **102** may require the user to login by entering a user name and password. Once server **102** has determined that the user is an authorized user, the user will be granted access to system **100**. In one exemplary embodiment, the user is a financial advisor or planner. Authentication data may be stored in database **104**.

FIG. **2** illustrates an exemplary portion of a graphical user interface **110** that provides access to system **100** once a user has been properly authenticated. In the exemplary embodi-

ment shown, graphical user interface **110** is presented by benefits estimator server **102** through a web browser or other suitable software application running on client **106**. Once benefits estimator server **102** has authenticated the user, the user will have access to an initial data entry page **112**. The system described in this disclosure is particularly useful for financial planners, allowing the financial planner to provide a married couple with sound advice regarding the best approach to receiving Social Security benefits.

As shown in FIG. **2**, initial data entry page **112** includes a plurality of fields allowing a user to enter data regarding a married couple. In the exemplary embodiment shown, initial data page **112** includes a year of birth field **114**, a full retirement age field **116**, a monthly benefit at age 62 field **118**, a monthly benefit at full retirement age (FRA) field **120**, and a monthly benefit at age 70 field **122** for each spouse, arranged in a husband column **124** and a wife column **126**. The information needed to populate the data fields can be found in the Social Security statement that each individual paying Social Security taxes receives each year from the Social Security Administration. As shown in FIG. **2**, initial data entry page **112** may include a link **128** that takes a user to a page hosted by the Social Security Administration explaining what the Social Security statement is as well as a link **130** to a web page that includes information on ordering duplicate copies of the statement.

FIG. **3** is an additional illustration of initial data entry page **112** with each of the data fields populated with client data. In the example shown in FIG. **3**, the user has entered the birth year for both the husband and wife as 1947, and the full retirement age as 66 for both spouses as well. In the exemplary embodiment shown, full retirement age field **116** is a pull-down menu with a predetermined number of selections that include all possible retirement ages, as determined by the Social Security Administration. In another exemplary embodiment, full retirement age field **116** is automatically populated based on the data entered in year of birth field **114**. In the example shown in FIG. **3**, the husband would be designated as the primary earner because his estimated monthly benefit at full retirement age ($2,257) is higher than the estimated monthly benefit at full retirement age for the wife ($552). In one exemplary embodiment, data regarding the retirement ages based on date of birth is stored in database **104** and accessed by benefits estimator server **102** to determine the appropriate full retirement age to be used for both the primary earner and the secondary earner.

Once the estimated benefits from the Social Security statement have been entered into initial data entry page **112**, the user will click on or otherwise select a Continue button **132** to access an estimated lifetime benefits page **134**, as shown in FIG. **4**. This page allows the user to enter a number of assumed age of death estimates for each spouse and learn how the benefits received by each spouse would be affected by the age at which each spouse begins taking benefits.

Estimated lifetime benefits page **134** includes two sections: an earnings history section **136** and an assumption section **138**. Earning history section **136** may include a table summarizing the earning history for both the primary earner and the secondary earner. For the secondary earner, the table may include an age column **140** and a monthly benefit column **142**, showing the monthly benefit if the secondary earner were to retire at age 62, at full retirement age (age 66 in the example shown in FIG. **4**), and at age 70, as entered by the user in initial data entry page **112**. For the primary earner, the table will also include an age column **144**, and a monthly benefit column **146**, as well as a spousal benefit column **148** and a survivor benefit column **150**. Data shown in monthly benefit column **146** for the primary earner is taken directly from the data entered into initial data entry page **112**. Data shown in spousal benefit column **148** and survivor benefit column **150** is calculated based on the rules set forth by the Social Security Administration. In one exemplary embodiment, these rules may be stored in database **104** and accessed by benefits estimator server **102** to calculate the data shown in spousal benefit column **148** and survivor benefit column **150**. In one exemplary embodiment, the amounts shown in spousal benefit column **148** are rounded to the nearest whole number for display in the table of the earning history section **136**; however, further calculations may use the actual benefit amount rather than the rounded amount. The data stored in database **104** may be automatically updated to reflect any change in the rules set forth by the Social Security Administration or by law.

Additional views of assumption section **138** of estimated lifetime benefits page **134** are shown in FIGS. **5** through **7**. As shown in FIG. **5**, assumption section **138** includes an assumed age of death data entry field **152** for the primary earner as well as an assumed age of death data entry field **154** for the secondary earner. Once the user has entered an assumed age of death in both field **152** and field **154**, an estimated lifetime benefits table **156** is automatically populated, as shown in FIG. **6**.

In the exemplary embodiment shown in FIG. **6**, estimated lifetime benefits table **156** may include a secondary earner benefits row **158** (Wife Benefits in the example shown in FIGS. **5** through **7**), a Spousal Benefits row **160**, a primary earner benefits row **162** (Husband Benefits in the example shown in FIGS. **5** through **7**), a Survivor Benefits row **164**, and a Total row **166**. Table **156** may also include columns listing various retirement benefit scenarios for a married couple. In the example shown in FIG. **6**, table **156** includes a Both at 62 column **168**, a Both at FRA column **170**, a Both at 70 column **172**, and a Hybrid column **174**. In each of the columns, an estimated lifetime amount is shown for the corresponding benefits row.

Once the user has entered an assumed age of death in both fields **152** and **154**, the data shown in table **156** is calculated by benefits estimator server **102** and automatically displayed within the table. Both at 62 column **168** displays the calculated estimated lifetime benefits for each of the benefits rows if both spouses were to begin receiving Social Security Benefits at age 62, the earliest age at which the Social Security Administration allows an individual to begin receiving benefits. If the primary earner is younger, but reaches 62 before the secondary earner has reached full retirement age, spousal benefits estimates shown in table **156** may be calculated using the fully reduced (age 62) adjusted spousal benefit. The actual spousal benefit received from the Social Security Administration may be higher.

The Both at FRA column displays the calculated estimated lifetime benefits for each of the benefit rows if both spouses were to begin receiving benefits at each spouse's respective full retirement age. The full retirement age may be different for each spouse, depending on their ages.

The Both at 70 column displays the calculated estimated lifetime benefits for each of the benefits rows if each spouse were to delay receiving Social Security benefits until age 70, after which there is no advantage to further delaying benefits because the Social Security Administration no longer awards deferred retirement credits after the age of 70. For each of the columns in table **156**, the calculated value for each of the benefits rows is summed by server **102** and displayed in the Total row **166** for each column. The Total row **166** allows the user to quickly see which of all the scenarios will provide the

clients with the highest benefit amount based on the assumed age of death for each spouse.

Hybrid column **174** displays the calculated estimated lifetime benefits for each of the benefits row using a hybrid approach. Under this hybrid approach, the secondary earner collects her own reduced benefit at age 62, and an unreduced spousal benefit at full retirement age while the primary earner defers collection of benefits until age 70. This hybrid strategy may not be illustrated if the spouses are more than five years apart in age, since such a scenario may require the primary earner to file for benefits prior to the secondary earner reaching full-retirement age. Estimated lifetime benefits table **156** allows the user to quickly analyze various strategies and provide clients with sound advice regarding the optimal time to start receiving benefits. As shown in FIG. **6**, the hybrid approach often results in the maximum benefit amount when compared with other approaches.

As shown in FIGS. **5** and **6**, assumption section **138** of estimated lifetime benefits page **134** may include an Add Assumption button **176**, a Start Over button **178**, and a Print Report button **180**. By selecting Add Assumption button **176**, the user can dynamically add an additional estimated lifetime earnings table **182**, as shown in FIG. **7**. This allows the user to enter new assumed ages for the death of each spouse, which in turn causes server **102** to calculate new data and populate the additional table **182**. This functionality allows the user to try out a number of assumed age of death estimates for each spouse and learn how the clients' benefits will be affected by viewing the data for the different estimates together on a single page. The tables shown in FIG. **7** use the monthly benefits entered by the user to illustrate the lifetime benefit totals under four different scenarios. When one of the spouses has a choice of benefit, for example, between an individual benefit and a spousal benefit, the higher of the two benefits is shown. The Add Assumption button **176** allows the user to add a plurality of additional tables. By looking at several tables, each based on different assumptions for the age of death, a user will quickly get a feel for the scenario that most often yields the highest total benefit to the married couple.

Selecting Start Over button **178** will take the user back to initial data entry page **112**, allowing the user to edit the previously entered data or enter new data and perform a new calculation. Selecting Print Report button **180** generates a printable report that summarizes all of the data entered into initial data entry page **112** as well as the data calculated on estimated lifetime benefits page **134**. An example of such a report in shown in FIG. **8**. Although the example report shown in FIG. **8** illustrates only a single scenario, the report may show all of the scenarios that a user has produced using system **100**.

The present invention, as described above and shown in the drawings, provides for systems and methods for calculating estimated Social Security benefits for married couples and determining the scenario that will yield the maximum total benefit for the couple. It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various modifications and variations can be made to the systems and methods of the present invention without departing from the scope of the invention as outlined in the appended claims and their equivalents.

The invention claimed is:

**1**. A system for calculating estimated Social Security benefits for a married couple, the system comprising:

a benefits estimator server configured to automatically update to reflect a change in rules regarding a calculation of Social Security benefits;

a rules database separate from but coupled to the benefits estimate server via a network; and

a calculator configured to receive input data and social security calculation rules from the rules database and transmit output data, via the benefits estimator server, based on the input data and the social security calculation rules, wherein the input data includes data regarding a primary earner and a secondary earner in the married couple, including an assumed age of death for the primary earner and an assumed age of death for the secondary earner, and wherein the output data includes benefits for a plurality of Social Security benefits categories for the married couple including:

a first value when the primary earner and the secondary earner take benefits at a first age;

a second value when the primary earner and the secondary earner take benefits at a second age greater than the first age; and

a third value when the married couple employs a hybrid approach, wherein the secondary earner collects a reduced benefit at the first age and a spousal benefit at the second age, and wherein the primary earner collects benefits at a third age.

**2**. The system of claim **1**, wherein the input data further includes a year of birth and a full retirement age for the primary earner and a full retirement age for the secondary earner in the married couple.

**3**. The system of claim **1**, wherein the input data further includes the first value, the second value, and the third value.

**4**. The system of claim **1**, wherein the plurality of Social Security benefits categories includes primary earner benefits, secondary earner benefits, survivor benefits, and spousal benefits.

**5**. The system of claim **1**, wherein the output data is presented as table comprising rows and columns, with the rows of data corresponding to the Social Security benefits and the columns corresponding to a plurality of options the married couple has for receiving the Social Security benefits.

**6**. The system of claim **5**, wherein the plurality of Social Security benefits categories includes one or more of primary earner benefits, secondary earner benefits, survivor benefits, and spousal benefits.

**7**. The system of claim **1**, wherein the first age is 62, the second age is a full retirement age as defined by the Social Security Administration, and the third age is 70.

**8**. The system of claim **5**, wherein the columns include an estimated lifetime total for each of the Social Security benefits, including a value for each of the Social Security benefits when the primary and the secondary earner take benefits at the second age.

**9**. The system of claim **5**, wherein the columns include an estimated lifetime total for each of the Social Security benefits, including a value for each of the Social Security benefits when the primary and the secondary earner take benefits at the third age.

**10**. The system of claim **5**, wherein the columns include an estimated lifetime total for each of the Social Security benefits, including a value for each of the Social Security benefits when the married couple employs a hybrid approach.

**11**. The system of claim **1**, wherein the output data comprises a selectable link that, when selected, causes a web page hosted by the Social Security Administration that includes the first value, the second value, and the third value to be displayed.

12. The system of claim 1, wherein the calculator is further configured to automatically output for display the first value, the second value, and the third value, based on the assumed age of death for the primary earner and the assumed age of death for the secondary earner.

13. The system of claim 12, wherein the calculator is further configured to display a fourth value when the primary earner and the secondary earner take benefits at the first age, a fifth value when the primary earner and the secondary earner take benefits at the second age, and a sixth value when the primary earner and the secondary earner take benefits at the third age corresponding to a second assumed age of death of the primary earner and a second assumed age of death of the secondary earner.

14. The system of claim 13, wherein at least one of the second assumed age of death of the primary earner or the second assumed age of death of the secondary earner is different than the assumed of age death of the primary earner or the assumed age of death of the second earner.

15. A non-transitory computer readable medium comprising machine-readable instructions executable to cause a machine to perform operations comprising:

receiving input data, wherein the input data is associated with a primary earner and a secondary earner in a married couple, including an assumed age of death for the primary earner and an assumed age of death for the secondary earner;

retrieving, from a database, rules associated with a calculation of Social Security Benefits;

generating, based on the rules and the input data, a first value when the primary earner and the secondary earner take benefits at a first age, a second value when the primary earner and the secondary earner take benefits at a second age greater than the first age, and a third value when the married couple employs a hybrid approach, wherein the secondary earner collects a reduced benefit at the first age and a spousal benefit at the second age, and wherein the primary earner collects benefits at a third age; and

causing the first value, the second value, and the third value for the primary earner and the secondary earner to be displayed.

16. The non-transitory computer readable medium of claim 15, wherein the rules are updated based on changes from the Social Security Administration.

17. The non-transitory computer readable medium of claim 15,

wherein the input data further comprises a second assumed age of death for the primary earner and a second assumed age of death for the secondary earner,

wherein the operations further comprise causing to be displayed a fourth value when the primary earner and the secondary earner take benefits at the first age, a fifth value when the primary earner and the secondary earner take benefits at the second age, and a sixth value when the primary earner and the secondary earner take benefits at the third age, the third age corresponding to a second assumed age of death of the primary earner and a second assumed age of death of the secondary earner.

18. The non-transitory computer readable medium of claim 15, wherein the first value, the second value, and the third value are presented in a table, with rows of data corresponding to the Social Security benefits and columns corresponding to a plurality of options the married couple has for receiving the Social Security benefits.

19. The non-transitory computer readable medium of claim 18, wherein the columns include an estimated lifetime total for the Social Security benefits, including a value for each of the Social Security benefits when the married couple takes benefits at the second age, when the married couple takes benefits at the third age, and when the married couple employs a hybrid approach.

20. A method for calculating estimated Social Security benefits for a married couple, the method comprising:

receiving, by a calculator of a benefits estimator server configured to automatically update to reflect a change in rules regarding a calculation of Social Security benefits, input data, wherein the input data is associated with a primary earner and a secondary earner in the married couple, including an assumed age of death for the primary earner and an assumed age of death for the secondary earner;

retrieving, by the benefits estimator server from a database separate from the benefits estimator server, current rules associated with the calculation of Social Security Benefits;

determining, by the calculator based on the current rules and the input data, a first value when the primary earner and the secondary earner take benefits at a first age, a second value when the primary earner and the secondary earner take benefits at a second age greater than the first age, and a third value when the married couple employs a hybrid approach, wherein the secondary earner collects a reduced benefit at the first age and a spousal benefit at the second age, and wherein the primary earner collects benefits at a third age; and

causing, by the benefits estimator server, the first value, the second value, and the third value for the primary earner and the secondary earner to be displayed.

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