

# MONEY MATTERS

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## Creditors can't take your Social Security

**Q:** *I'm 88 years old. I'm so deeply in debt I don't know what to do. All I get is Social Security. If I put my check in the bank, can a creditor take it? I appreciate your help.*

— C.S., Brooklyn

**A:** Local bankers, including National City and Key, say that Social Security can be legally protected from creditors. So if that's all you have in the account, it is not subject to attachment or garnishment by third-party creditors. I also referred you to an expert in the community who can help you sort out your finances. And you should contact the non-profit Legal Aid Society for free legal help.

**Q:** *My credit card company has been raising my interest rate without my permission. It was 15 percent, then it went to 18 percent. It's gone up two more times and now it's 25.74 percent. I have never paid this bill late, although I did settle a couple of accounts with other credit card companies. Now my rate on this one goes up? This is harassment. How can they do this?*

— P.L., Avon

**A:** You're learning a lesson the hard way: What you do in one part of your financial life indeed can affect other parts. Unfortunately for you, your credit card company can raise your interest rate based on *any* information in your credit file — even information that has nothing to do with that company. This company obviously has decided you're more of a risk than you used to be; that's reasonable if you've settled