

OPINION

Don't expect a rise in Social Security payments

Yearly increases in Social Security, and other federal annuities, depend on increases in the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). The calculation begins with the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

The baseline is the current year's COLA. Then the Bureau of Labor Statistics will calculate the CPI for the months July through September. If the CPI during these three months is not more than the current COLA there will be no increase for 2016.

This is a long way around saying that if there is no 2015 inflation, your 2016 wallet stays slim.

So then, how does it look for next year? Not good. We are through two of the base months and the CPI is .4 percent below the COLA. It was .2 percent lower last month — so you see the trend.

A major culprit is at the pump. While we cheer that gas is a buck less this year than last, we are celebrating a short term gain and long term loss. Also, airfares are down 5 percent which also contribute. Fear not, you will not see a reduction if the numbers are negative. A law prohibits that.

No Social Security increase has happened twice before: 2009 and 2010. It appears we are about to have a third.

The final September figures will be released Oct. 15.

**Star Carey,
Canyon Lake**