



### About Matthew Crider, J.D.

Matthew Crider formed [Crider Law PC](#) in 1999 so he could help individuals and business owners by providing creative solutions and be their trusted advisor and legal counselor. He serves his clients by listening closely to their goals, dreams and concerns and working with them to develop superior and comprehensive estate and asset protection plans. His estate planning practice focuses on preserving and growing wealth by providing comprehensive, highly personalized estate planning counsel to couples, families, individuals and businesses.

## Remember to change beneficiary designees

By Matthew Crider, JD | Family Wealth Protection Attorney

The Supreme Court recently ruled that the ex-wife and not the widow of a deceased man was entitled to his life insurance payout.

How is that possible?

Well, according to an article in [Forbes](#), the man forgot to change the beneficiary designated on his policy. It didn't matter that he had been divorced from his ex for more than 10 years.

The case involved a 66-year-old man who died in 2008. His life insurance policy was worth \$125,000.

So for five years, his ex and his widow had been battling over who should get the money.

The U.S. Supreme Court finally ruled that the ex was entitled to the money - every cent of it -- because the man had made a basic and common estate planning mistake. He had not changed the name of the beneficiary on his policy from his ex to his current wife. He probably just forgot.

Some states have laws protecting subsequent spouses in such cases. Oddly, the man lived in a state with such a protection. But since he was a federal employee, federal law trumped the state law, the court ruled.

The lesson: keep your beneficiary forms up to date. All that has to be done is to sign and file an amended form. Even if your state has a law to cover such an oversight, you can't always count on it.