

Social Security News & Pension Watch

Many of you know the effects of the GPO, the WEP or both on a very personal level. These unjust Social Security provisions reduce and in some cases eliminate benefits for public education retirees, as well as many other public employee retirees. The bottom line is that public pensioners all over the country are being penalized for their service. The impact is felt by educators, municipal workers, state employees, federal employees and even the United States military.

With hundreds of thousands of Americans hurting from the financial impact of the GPO and the WEP, why has Congress failed to act? In an era of bailing out the big banks and financial institutions, why has Congress turned its back on public employees who have spent their lives in service to our schools, fire stations, communities and even on the battlefield? The only plausible answer is that Congress believes they can continue taking money from retirees with little or no action on this matter.

Hundreds of Congressional members find solace in cosponsoring legislation that calls for the repeal of these provisions, while never taking any definitive steps toward that end. All the while, retired public employees are heavily recruited to support the same Congressional members when it comes time to go to the ballot box. These same retirees are being ignored, misled and cast aside for issues Congress believes are more important.

Can such a claim really be made about Congressional officials who profess their desire to see these actions reversed? The proof is in their actions. The GPO and WEP are simply punted from one Congressional session to the next with little more than a symbolic cosponsor list and an occasional committee hearing.

The issue has been raised with Congress consistently for more than 20 years. Although awareness of GPO/WEP is as high as it has ever been, Congress still fails to make it a realistic priority.

In early March 2010 many members of the Retired Teachers Association (RTA) network will be meeting in Washington, DC, with Congressional members and staff on the GPO/WEP issue. The RTA network is an organization of retired teacher associations around the country. KRTA representatives will be participating in this GPO/WEP summit.

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In the many years RTAs have been working to repeal the GPO/WEP, few instances can be cited in which Congressional activity has actually brought decision makers to the table to advance the GPO/WEP repeal effort. Every now and then, a hearing or press conference is held, but they are few and far between and have had minimal effect.

Therefore, through the upcoming GPO/WEP summit, Congressional members are being asked to explain in person what actions they are taking and what activities we can undertake to repeal these harmful provisions. Plans also call for representatives from the Social Security Administration, various Congressional staffers and our allies from other state and national constituent groups at the summit to work with us. The summit's success, though, relies primarily on the participation of the Congressional members we are counting on to move this issue forward.

These Congressional members are expected to discuss what they are doing to move this issue forward: what the resistance is, what the current financial estimates for repeal are, who is working with us on this issue and what each state's RTA members can expect Congress to do now. If you are a retired teacher who is affected by the GPO/WEP issue, your help and financial assistance may be needed.

KRTA continues to work closely with the Coalition to Preserve Retirement Security (CPRS) on important social security issues (i.e., mandatory social security, GPO and WEP). The attacks on public employees' retirement security (i.e., Kentucky retired teachers) remain and are increasing. KRTA continues to work on these issues at the national level with the Coalition to Preserve Retirement Security (CPRS) and the Retired Educators Association Social Security Coalition.

**Regular updates concerning Social Security and Pension issues will appear in each issue of the KRTA News.
Look for them.**