



News from Washington

Senate subcommittee holds hearing on WEP/GPO repeal

On June 7, the Senate Subcommittee on Social Security, Pensions, and Family Policy held a hearing on the Social Security Fairness Act (S. 597). The bill would repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO), parts of Social Security law that unfairly reduce, and sometimes eliminate, Social Security benefits of public employees, including letter carriers, who have earned pension benefits from public employee pension plans such as the Civil Service Retirement System.

The hearing was held at the Columbus Firefighters IAFF Local 67 union hall in Columbus, OH. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) leads the bipartisan bill with Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME).

Seven witnesses, all from Ohio, testified at the hearing. They were Brian Steel, president, Fraternal Order of Police Capital City Lodge #9; George Sakellakis, director of organization, Ohio Patrolmen's Benevolent Association; Jamie Patton, Buckeye Sheriffs; Carl Jordan, pension and disability representative, Ohio Association of Professional Firefighters; Barb Ward, special needs bus driver; Diane Gibson, retired teacher; and Cheryl Williams, school secretary.

In his opening statement, Sen. Brown thanked the witnesses for sharing their experiences, called the reduction of benefits of public servants unfair, and mentioned that the WEP and GPO make it difficult to recruit and retain employees in the public sector.

NALC President Brian L. Renfroe and Ohio State Association of Letter Carriers President Jeff Kranz submitted comments to the subcommittee explaining how these provisions harm letter carriers (see letter above).

Fifty-nine senators are co-sponsoring the Senate bill, and 322 members have

signed onto the House version.

The Senate field hearing follows two subcommittee hearings in the House and growing momentum for the legislation.

"NALC appreciates the subcommittee holding a hearing on this critical legislation," President Renfroe said. "It is beyond time for Congress to right this wrong, and we urge the House and Senate to pass this bill."

Ask Congress to support the Protect Our Letter Carriers Act

As this magazine was going to print, the bipartisan Protect Our Letter Carriers Act (H.R. 7629/S. 4356) had 89 co-sponsors in the House. Sens. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and Josh Hawley (R-MO) introduced a companion Senate bill in May. All letter carriers are encouraged to visit nalc.org/action and ask their members of Congress to co-sponsor the legislation.

The bill would increase federal prosecution rates for crimes against letter carriers, strengthen sentencing guidelines for these crimes, and provide \$7 billion in funding for the Postal Service to secure its infrastructure.

President Renfroe helped get the message out about the crime issue,



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Dear Chairman Brown, Ranking Member Tillis, and members Subcommittee on Social Security, Pensions, and Family Policy,

We are submitting these comments on behalf of the Ohio State Association of Letter Carriers (OHSALC), which represents more than 14,000 active and retired city letter carriers.

First, we would like to express our appreciation for the field hearing held in Columbus, OH, on June 7. It is important and powerful to hear civil servants share their stories about how the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO) unfairly affect them. Unfortunately, these are stories we know all too well since these provisions negatively impact our members in Ohio and nationwide.

As you know, the WEP and GPO wrongfully reduce or sometimes eliminate the benefits that letter carriers and other public workers have paid into and earned throughout their careers.

Letter carriers spend their working lives serving their communities and providing an essential service that all Americans rely on. We are lifelines for seniors who need medications. We ensure our customers receive paychecks and bills on time. We deliver essential packages six and sometimes seven days a week. We are proven devoted public servants who deserve to receive the full Social Security benefits that we have earned.

Our retired members, who are living on fixed incomes, are not asking for anything extra. We, alongside millions of other public employees, are asking you to repeal the WEP and GPO so that we can receive the benefits we are entitled to and enjoy the modest retirement that we worked for and expected.

This benefit reduction does not happen in the private sector, and if it did, it would likely be tried in court. We must do better by treating our public servants better. We cannot allow the government to keep taking from our earned retirement benefits. It is time to finally repeal the WEP and GPO, with your help and support.

We appreciate your consideration of the Social Security Fairness Act (S. 597), and the OHSALC strongly urges the committee to mark up the legislation.

Sincerely,

Brian L. Renfroe
President, National Association of Letter Carriers

Jeff Kranz
President, Ohio State Association of Letter Carriers

Affiliated with the AFL-CIO & UNI Global Union

and the need to support the legislation to combat it, through an interview with the NBC division of 11 NBC-owned stations around the country, which are in top markets including Washington, DC; New York City; Chicago; Dallas and Los Angeles. Among others communicating that message recently were Las Vegas Branch 2502 President **Paul Peterman** on Univision and Las Vegas public radio.

The August recess is an excellent opportunity to schedule in-district meetings with your members of Congress. Letter carriers are encouraged to contact district offices and schedule meetings with lawmakers to educate them about this bill and ask for their support. **PR**