

Finally, Social Security fairness for our retirees



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This month's issue celebrates a major historic legislative victory for NALC. After more than 40 years, Congress finally repealed the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO). In the early morning of Dec. 21, with almost no time to spare in one of the last scheduled legislative days of the year, the Senate passed the Social Security Fairness Act, sending the bill to President Joe Biden for his signature.

In a divided Congress, where it often seems that very little legislation becomes law, this bill's passage is a major accomplishment and a testament to the steadfast grassroots efforts of letter carriers across the country.

The law will finally restore full Social Security benefits for every single Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) retiree. The history of the WEP and GPO and more information on how it negatively affected retired letter carriers is available on page 9. In short, the WEP and GPO unfairly penalized CSRS retirees who also spent part of their careers in private-sector jobs, as many letter carriers and other public servants do. It was a gross injustice that went on for far too long, but today, we can finally celebrate this victory that will make a substantial difference for so many letter carriers and their beneficiaries.

On the surface, this issue seems straightforward. I think almost everyone would agree that reducing—or, quite frankly, stealing—from hardworking retirees' Social Security benefits is wrong. So why did it take so long for this bill to become law? And what made the 118th Congress the right, even if unlikely, setting to get this bill to the president's desk?

Despite consistent bipartisan support from Congress for more than 20 years, no one could manage to get it passed. Costs, pay-fors (requirements to offset the cost of legislation), and Social Security solvency were repeated arguments we heard when we pushed to get the bill forward. But letter carriers never let up. Each Congress, a bill was introduced to repeal the WEP and GPO, and every time our advocates made calls, wrote letters, sent

emails and met with their members of Congress to get their support.

In the 118th Congress, we saw all that advocacy work pay off. After the bill was introduced in January 2023, NALC participated in several events on Capitol grounds to gain support for the bill. While speaking at these events, I could tell that they were not just fluff and noise to get attention. Real momentum was being created and these events helped get the bill through Congress.

The discharge petition, which was necessary to get the bill through the House, reached its signature threshold hours after a press event we participated in outside the Capitol in September. At a labor-led event last month, co-sponsored by NALC, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) announced that the bill would go to the Senate floor. Our close work with the bill's leads and House and Senate leadership, alongside the unwavering commitment and advocacy of our members, was essential to getting this bill across the finish line.

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Retired letter carriers are special to me. I grew up with many retirees back during their working days. I lost one of them, my father, Ken, in September. He was a retired letter carrier affected by WEP and GPO. We talked about how unfair it was and the difficulties we've faced getting this law repealed. He told me, “Keep at it, and it will happen because it's right and it's fair.” As usual, he was correct. This win is another reminder of what we can achieve when we keep fighting, no matter how long it takes.

While the fight was long, it was certainly worth it. I am so pleased that all our CSRS retirees will finally rightfully receive the full Social Security benefits that they earned and have always deserved. We celebrate this achievement because of the immediate impact it has on thousands of NALC members who served their customers and our union for decades. Together, we keep fighting as they always have.