



September 20, 2021

The Honorable Richard Neal
United States Representative
372 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Mark Bernard
Executive Director

Charles C. Owen, Jr.
President

Chris "Tiger" Stockbridge
Vice President

Nancy Silva
Recording Secretary

Gerry Mills
Treasurer

Jack Wagner
Sgt. at Arms

Dear Congressman Neal:

We are writing to follow-up on a conversation we had on September 16th during a question and answer session at a Boston fundraising event held on your behalf and attended by a number of public and private sector labor union leaders.

You may recall that we asked for your support for HR 82, which seeks to fully repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO).

For nearly four decades, the WEP and GPO have wrongfully cut tens of thousands of dollars in social security benefits from workers and their spouses.

Specifically, the WEP significantly reduces a worker's social benefit if that worker collects a public pension from a job not covered by a social security benefit – even if that worker paid for, and earned, that benefit from working in a job prior to, or after, working in a public-sector job. The WEP also unfairly penalizes those who have been simultaneously working a public and private sector job to support themselves and their families.

The Government Pension Offset (GPO), which we view as the far more egregious of the two, cuts by as much as two-thirds any survivor's benefit a worker's spouse may be entitled if that surviving spouse collects a public pension from a job not covered by social security – even if they are entitled to the survivor benefit based on their spouse's past work in a social security covered job.

At the Boston fundraising event, you characterized this as an issue impacting retired public employees in a handful of states. We must respectfully disagree. Here's why:

- Since the GPO impacts people whose spouses have faithfully paid into the system with the understanding their spouse will receive a survivor benefit, this issue also impacts anyone who is married to a public employee and mistakenly believes their spouse will have sufficient income after they are deceased. It also impacts workers, who although may not be directly affected, have to support aging parents, grandparents and other family members who are unable to support themselves due to the cuts from the WEP and GPO.
- Given that this issue has lingered for more than four decades and retirees from the original impacted states have moved throughout the country, there are now retirees and their spouses who are impacted by the WEP and/or GPO who reside in all fifty states. For example, in neighboring New Hampshire, there are nearly 11,000 people who are impacted.
- With no end in sight to these deep cuts in retirement benefits, we view this as a critical issue for active employees, most of whom are unaware they and their spouse will be impacted.
- Finally, given that 84% of the people affected by the GPO are women, we also view this as a women's issue.

According to the Social Security Administration, more than **76,000 Massachusetts retirees** are hurt by the WEP and nearly **39,000 surviving spouses** are impacted by the GPO. Many are impacted by both including a leader of our AFSCME Council 93 Retiree Chapter who is robbed of more than eleven hundred dollars EVERY SINGLE MONTH.

While we appreciate your efforts as the lead sponsor of HR 2337, we must respectfully state that your legislation falls far short of what needs to be done to correct this injustice once and for all.

If passed, HR 2337 would only make modest progress on the WEP, and would leave the GPO fully intact. We believe it's important to note that as of the date of this letter, HR 2337 does not have a single Republican among the bill's 176 co-sponsors.

In contrast, HR 82 fully repeals both the WEP and the GPO and has the strong bi-partisan support of 54 Republicans and 169 Democrats, including all members of the Massachusetts delegation and every other Congressman in our four-state region - except you.

In fact, you stand alone as the only member of the house and senate in our four-state region of Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont who is not co-sponsoring the full repeal of the WEP and GPO included in HR 82 or S.1302.

As such, we respectfully ask that you do the following:

- Please sign on as a co-sponsor of HR 82
- Currently, 145 co-sponsors of your bill are also co-sponsoring HR 82. Please write to the remaining 31 Democrats (see attached) and ask them to join you in co-sponsoring HR 82.
- Call for a public hearing on HR 82 and use your leadership position in the house to build support for passage of full WEP/GPO repeal.

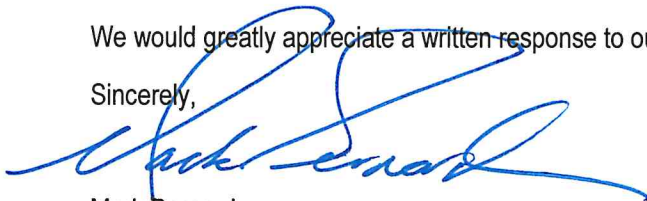
Please know that you can count on us to do everything we can to support these efforts. We have and will continue to:

- Generate awareness of this issue among our members who are still active public employees.
- Highlight the severe, disproportionate impact the GPO has on women.
- Educate leaders and members in the private-sector labor movement on how the GPO can impact the spouses of private sector workers.
- Strongly encourage leaders of our International Union in Washington, DC to withhold their support for anything short of a full WEP and GPO repeal.

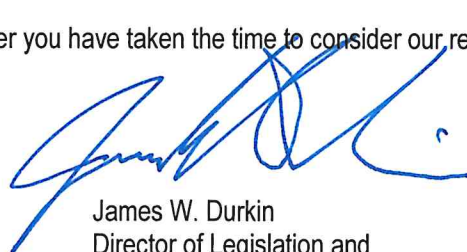
Thank you again for taking the time to discuss this issue with us. We hope we can count on you to use your leadership position in congress and the respect you have secured during your long and distinguished tenure in the U.S. House of Representatives to finally end this long-standing injustice.

We would greatly appreciate a written response to our letter after you have taken the time to consider our requests.

Sincerely,



Mark Bernard
AFSCME Council 93 Executive Director
AFSCME International Vice President



James W. Durkin
Director of Legislation and
Political Action

CC: Lee Saunders, AFSCME International President
Liz Schuler, President, AFL-CIO
Edward Kelly, General President, IAFF
Steve Tolman, President, Massachusetts AFL-CIO
Ed Keefe, President, AFSCME Council 93 Retirees
AFSCME Council 93 Executive Board
AFSCME International Executive Board

List of 32 Democratic Congressmen who co-sponsor HR 2337 bill but
DO NOT co-sponsor the full repeal in HR 82.

Alabama

Rep. Terri A. Sewell

California

Rep. Tony Cardenas

Rep. Jimmy Gomez

Rep. Doris O. Matsui

Colorado

Rep. Diana DeGette

Connecticut

Rep. John B. Larson

District of Columbia

Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton

Georgia

Rep. Lucy McBath

Illinois

Rep. Danny K. Davis

Maryland

Rep. Jamie Raskin

Massachusetts

Rep. Richard Neal

Michigan

Rep. Elissa Slotkin

Mississippi

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson

New Jersey

Rep. Bill Pascrell Jr.

New York

Rep. Jerrold Nadler

Rep. Nydia M. Velazquez

Nevada

Rep. Steven Horsford

Ohio

Rep. Marcy Kaptur

Oregon

Rep. Earl Blumenauer

Iowa

Rep. Cynthia Axne

Indiana

Rep. Andre Carson

Pennsylvania

Rep. Dwight Evans

Rep. Mary Gay Scanlon

Tennessee

Rep. Jim Cooper

Texas

Rep. Sylvia R. Garcia

Rep. Al Green

Rep. Eddie Johnson

Rep. Marc A. Veasey

Virginia

Rep. Jennifer Wexton

Washington

Rep. Kim Schrier

Rep. Adam Smith

Wisconsin

Rep. Gwen Moore