

IMPORTANT: Do not view this information while you are on government time, government property or while using government equipment. Do not forward this information to any DoDEA or other government email account or to anyone who is likely to view it while on government time or using government equipment.

1. Two Big Steps Forward in Repealing GPO/WEP. More than 2.5 million people dedicated to public service, including many FEA Retired educators, have their Social Security benefits reduced—or lose them entirely—due to the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO).

The WEP reduces the Social Security benefits of people who work in jobs covered by Social Security and jobs NOT covered by Social Security over the course of their careers—for example, educators compelled to take part-time or summer jobs to make ends meet. The GPO reduces the Social Security spousal or survivor benefits of people who get a government pension (federal, state or local) but did NOT pay Social Security taxes themselves. Two major steps forward happened this summer:

- a) The National Education Association, at their Representative Assembly (NEA-RA), voted to create a special task force made up of representatives from State Affiliates that have been impacted the most by these laws. This task force will focus solely on repealing GPO/WEP. This motion was strongly supported by FEA's delegation.
- b) The House Resolution 82 (the Social Security Fairness Act) now has 293 co-sponsors. This bill would fully repeal GPO/WEP. When a bill has 290 co-sponsors it will automatically go to the House floor for a vote. Please go to: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/82/cosponsors> to see who the 293 co-sponsors are. (Click on your State on the left hand side of the page to simplify your search.) If your representative is listed, please write him/her with your appreciation. If your representative is not listed, ask him/her for his/her support when the floor vote is taken.

2. Thank you for your Support. Once again, our FEA retired members helped support the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education, our way of electing pro-education candidates to state/national offices. Our FEA members at the Representative Assembly contributed over \$700 per delegate. Many FEA-R members contributed through the online auction. It is still not too late to give. Visit: www.neafund.org **Be sure to list “Federal Education Association” as your state affiliate, and list “retiree” as your contributor type.** Thank you for continued support.

3. NEA Member Benefits Has a New Program to Help Members Manage Educational Debt. NEA-Member Benefits is offering a special program for members to manage their educational debt and see if they are eligible for Federal loan forgiveness

programs. This service includes helping those who co-signed for loans as well. The program, SAVI, is like a tax-prep software for your student loans. It helps you use federal programs to lower your monthly payments and also checks for forgiveness options. The algorithm uses information that you provide to maximize your benefits and then streamline the enrollment process for you. Many of the features are free, and the “Essentials” portion of the program is free to NEA members for one-year. Visit: www.neamb.com (after logging in, click “Benefits” in the top banner, and then click “Student Loan Forgiveness and Refinancing.”)

4. FEA Wins. Have you been wondering what’s been going on with FEA and DoDEA since you retired? Well, FEA continues to advocate for its members, and you may recognize that FEA continues to battle the same problems—successfully. Be sure to visit these updates on the “Wins for Members” page on the FEA webpage. There are also highlights on how members are using special grants to help children progress academically. Visit <https://www.feaonline.org/wins-for-members/> for more details.

5. DoDDS Reunion draws hundreds to Kansas City. The 34th Reunion of DoDDS educators was held in Kansas City this summer. While attendance was down this year due to health concerns, over 400 attendees were able to meet and share memories. Mini-reunions were held for different school groups, along with a well-attended opening reception. FEA-Retired sponsored a table in the “Welcome Center” to share information on how FEA-R can assist all retirees through political advocacy and financial program (through NEA-Member Benefits). Over 100 of the attendees stopped by the table to collect information, share stories and take a picture or two. Michael Gavin, NEA-Member Benefits representative, was there to explain all the programs available to FEA-R members. Paula Jakub, CEO for American Foreign Service Protective Agency, gave an update on the Federal Employees Health Benefits program and how States are address long term care insurance across the US. Be sure to visit the DoDDS Reunion website <https://www.mydoddsreunion.com/> to see photos of this year’s event (to be posted soon), along with information on next year’s reunion (to be held in Omaha, Nebraska).

6. ...and yet COVID is not done with us. FEA-Retired knows firsthand, from its 2 summer conferences, that the COVID virus is still making a comeback. There were numerous outbreaks at both the NEA-RA and the DoDDS Reunion (both held in July). AARP noted that the new BA.5 variant is more contagious and can evade immunity. They recommend:

- a. Stay up-to-date on your vaccines (including boosters)
 - b. Keep “At-Home COVID” tests available. You can order more at: www.https://www.covid.gov/tests
 - c. Plan for treatment, if necessary, with your primary care physician.
 - d. Wear high quality masks (that cover the nose/mouth) indoors, especially when you cannot socially distance.
 - e. Avoid crowds in poorly ventilated area.
-