
March 2023

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1. Update for GPO/WEP Repeal—Mark Your Calendars. With a divided Congress, the push to repeal GPO/WEP will be an uphill battle this year. NEA is up to the challenge. As reported earlier, the NEA Task Force is working on a national day of lobbying Congress. The date will occur in mid-May (around May 17). Members will be encouraged to contact their Congressional representative to support the passage of The Social Security Fairness Act (HR82) that would fully repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO). NEA members will be traveling to DC to lobby (or virtually contact their representative). If you are able to be in the DC area at that time, make plans to meet with your representative. There are now 158 co-sponsors for this bill (up from 69 last month). More details on this event will be forthcoming.

2. Fair COLA Act for Seniors. The Fair COLA Act for Seniors was re-introduced to Congress which provides better tracking for the spending habits of seniors than the current system. Right now, the COLA calculation is based on the Consumer Price index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Worker (CPI-W). The CPI-W inadequately assesses the differences in costs for goods and services seniors frequently purchase. Medical costs for seniors are double the rate of the general population. By using the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly (CPI-E), the government would better track the spending habits of Americans age 62 and older to establish those costs associated with living on a fixed income. CPI-E inflation is greater by an estimated 0.27 percent per year than what the CPI-W shows. Let your representative know that you support HR 716. The bill currently has 22 co-sponsors.

3. Correction on Your FERS COLA. Last month, FEA-R reported that FERS retirees would receive a 7.7% increase on their Federal pension. One of our FEA-R members alerted us that this is misleading if the retiree is under the age of 62. According to Government Executive: “It is important to remember that those who retire under FERS and are younger than 62 on Dec. 1, 2022 will not see any of the increase in their 2023 FERS retirement benefit due to the delayed COLA that applies to most FERS retirees. Those who have reached 62 before December 2022 will receive the full 7.7% increase in their December FERS retirement benefit, payable in January 2023.” For more information on the retirement increase visit: <https://www.govexec.com/pay-benefits/2022/10/big-cola-boost-retirees/378397/> Again, many thanks to Laura Hastings our FEA-R member from Camp Lejeune, for catching this error and sharing this insight with all FEA members.

4. Lend Your Support to Our FEA Members in Japan. FEA members and other civilian federal employees in Japan and Okinawa not covered by Tricare Prime have lost virtually all access to DOD health care. These employees have been told they should seek health care through the

Japanese system but doing so has proven to be incredibly difficult or impossible. Affected civilian workers report being unable to even get an appointment with a medical professional, with some being turned away from Japanese medical facilities with conditions as severe as a heart attack or stroke. Use the FEA/NEA letter at <https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/action-center/take-action/restore-dodea-educators-access-health-care> to let the White House and DOD know immediate action is necessary to avoid a complete collapse of the civilian workforce that keeps military troops and facilities operating overseas.

5. The DoDDS Reunion in Omaha, Nebraska, is Quickly Approaching. Harry Stine announced last month that the Hilton Hotel in Omaha has opened the reservation process for those wishing to attend the DoDDS reunion. It will take place July 12-16, 2023, in Omaha, Nebraska. Hundreds of retirees have already registered. The cost is still \$105 through March 31. Register at: <https://www.mydoddsreunion.com>

6. Staying Healthy in 2023. Consumer Reports On Health (March 2023) offered some tips on staying healthy this year. They included:

- Avoid adding salt to your meal and lower your risk of a heart attack, heart failure or stroke by 23 percent.
 - Consider getting the shingles vaccine. A shingles infection increases the risk of heart attacks and strokes by 5 to 23 percent over 10 years.
 - Getting a good night's sleep daily, sleeping soundly and staying on a sleep schedule can reduce the risk factors for diabetes.
 - Taking a 2-minute break from sitting every half hour improves the body's use of amino acids, key for building and maintain muscle.
 - Set a goal of the number of steps you take each day. Try to increase your daily rate by 500 steps as you are able. It is recommended that those over 60 be in the range of 6,000 to 8,000 steps each day.
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