
January 2025 (HAPPY) NEW YEAR CELEBRATION

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1. Celebrate the New Year with a Major Congressional Win for FEA-Retired Members. A little past midnight on December 21st the US Senate passed the Social Security Fairness Act, to repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO), by a vote of 76-20. This bill had previously passed the House of Representative by a vote of 327-75 (indicative of the strong bipartisan support in Congress). NEA has been lobbying for over 4 decades to reverse the financially devastating impact of GPO/WEP on our FEA retirees under CSRS.

2. Who benefits from this repeal? Educators who worked in one of 15 states across the US are affected by this repeal which will restore their social security benefits. However, there are educators and former educators in all 50 states who have worked in the GPO/WEP states and were affected by these unfair provisions when they moved. For FEA members, it mainly reverses the penalties for those under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS). It can also affect those who were under FERS. Consider those educators who worked for years at Fort Knox, KY. When the post drew down, educators could have decided to teach in Kentucky schools. That would put them in one of those 15 states that would now subject them to the penalties under WEP. WEP reduced up to half of the Social Security benefits that educators in affected states earned in jobs where they did pay Social Security taxes. Studies have shown that 83% of those penalized by GPO were women who had their benefits in retirement cut.

3. NEA Organized Lobby Efforts Paid Off. NEA members, officers, staff and lobbyists worked tirelessly to achieve this victory. Several years ago, the NEA Representative Assembly passed a new business item to make the repeal of this law a priority. NEA members from across the US (including 3 FEA members) met in DC to lobby for the change. The NEA Board of Directors continued to make this fight a priority when the 158 board members were in DC for meeting to take time out to go to the Capitol to meet with lawmakers. FEA-R continued to highlight this fight in our monthly newsletters, and our FEA-R members stepped up to the task with emails, letters and phone calls to their representative. Our NEA lobbyist worked with those in both houses to get the bill out of committee and onto the floor for a vote. Anita Gibson, President of NEA-Retired, noted that “our years of advocacy have finally fixed this, not only for current retirees, but for future generations.”

4. A Personal Note from Our FEA-R Representative, Ingrid Ahlberg: “Be sure to share this news with your public service friends who may not know what unions like NEA have been doing for years. I know firsthand how this law has penalized those who paid into social security. My benefit was cut by over 50%. Who could live on less than \$225/month? Others need to know that NEA and other labor unions fought for them. It may make their new year happier!”

5. FEA-R Thanks Its Members! It is clear that NEA/FEA advocated for over 40 years to seek financial justice for its members and all public employees who lost money from this law (GPO/WEP). But as a strong Association and Union, NEA and FEA used their resources and connections to right this wrong. Not only do we believe in lifelong education, but we also fight for lifetime justice for all members. By continuing to support NEA-R/FEA-R, we have demonstrated what can be accomplished if we stay together. Thank you for being a part of this movement.

The passage of the Social Security Fairness Act is a fantastic example of the value NEA/FEA membership continues to provide to members even in retirement.

For more information on this huge win for Retired members, read NEA's statement (available at <https://www.nea.org/about-nea/media-center/press-releases/congress-makes-history-passes-bipartisan-social-security-fairness-act>) and the victory editorial on the NEA Today site, <https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/landmark-victory-gpo-and-wep-repealed>.
