Presentation by Liz Curtis for SSFAIRNESS.COM

For use by the public in fight to repeal GPO/WEP which unjustly penalize our public servants
GPO & WEP

What can one person do?
GPO/WEP & workforce

More than $\frac{1}{5}$ all public employees at risk

More than $\frac{1}{3}$ all educators at risk
What is Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP)? Since 1983

WEP affects one’s own earned Social Security benefits.

For many a set formula will significantly reduce SS benefits.

You can lose an amount up to half of the amount of your public pension.

Held to a different standard
WEP affects those who:

Have had **2 careers** when...

**JOB 1**
Entitles them to a pension from state/local gov’t work which does **not pay Social Security taxes**.

**JOB 2**
Entitles them to a Social Security retirement or disability benefit from work which **does pay SS taxes**.

Held to a different standard
What is the GPO? Since 1977

The Government Pension Offset

The GPO affects:
SS  Spousal & Survivor Benefits

Held to a different standard
Who does the GPO affect?

Persons who...

Work(ed) for a state/local gov’t in employment not taxed by Social Security.

And are also...

Entitled to dependent spouse or survivor’s Social Security benefits.

Held to a different standard
Normal dependent Spouse & Survivor benefits

Normally the retired **dependent spouse** receives an amount equal to **50%** of earner’s SS. When earner retires, the couple receives 150% of the earner's amount if both are retired. A divorced spouse gets the 50% if they were married for 10 years or more.

**Normally**, a **widow/er** is awarded **100%** of Spouse’s Social Security pension.
Benefit reductions due to GPO

- **GPO penalty:** Social Security spousal & survivor benefits are *reduced by 2/3* amount of the separate & independent pension earned by one’s spouse, if that pension plan did not pay Social Security taxes.

- A pension of only $1,500/month can result in total *loss* of needed survivor benefits.
Occupations penalized

Teachers, police, firefighters, postal workers, air traffic controllers, customs agents, federal government employees (CSRS), & state, county, local & special district workers are penalized:

GPO & WEP = “Heroes’ Penalties”
Federal workers penalized in all states and overseas as well.
State, county, municipal employees penalized in 26 states (in blue)

Largest populations: CA, CO, IL, LA, OH, TX
Teachers in Alaska & 14 other states

Alaska, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nevada, Ohio, Rhode Island, Texas
Not double dipping!

- Worked 2 jobs paying into 2 different systems, each for required time.

- Should earn 2 partial retirements incomes independent of each other.

- Even Federal law taxes Social Security and public agency pensions differently.

We earned benefits from both.
Recruitment stifled

“Current law not only makes it more difficult to recruit teachers, police officers and fire fighters, but it penalizes the invaluable public servants who have already given so much.” Senator Diane Feinstein
Can a pensioner & family afford this SS loss?

WEP loss example

- $500/month which equals....
- $6,000/year which equals....
- $90,000 total lost in 15 years

GPO losses are often substantially more!

Ouch!
Severe financial hardship

Especially for...

Widows & divorced women, & the aged.

Many live below federal poverty level.

Most widows get NO spousal benefits
Real people & GPO/WEP losses

True stories:
The following people or their spouse paid the full contribution to Social Security for 10 years and often many more, but are denied the full benefit, due to GPO/WEP.

GPO/WEP = Financial IN$ecurity
Cheated in Massachusetts

- 13 years in the military, served in war where I earned:
  3 Bronze Stars for valor
  Plus a Purple Heart 🌹

- 22 years in teaching

“I am shocked to learn I will receive virtually nothing from Social Security.”

Victim of WEP
"I worked both as a teacher & a registered nurse & have paid FULLY into both Social Security & my teacher’s pension fund for retirement."

"Must I retire in poverty because I worked hard in both areas but will only be fairly compensated for one?"
Food stamps for teacher in Texas?

- Husband in nursing home with huge copayments.
- Annuity not adequate.
- **Full** Social Security benefits would alleviate serious need.

All because... I taught in two different states

Victim of WEP
Facing poverty in Ohio .... Does anyone care?

Worked 15 SS years & 20 teaching years

Choice
- A. Retire at $16,000/year.
- B. Work until 73 for full teacher’s pension.

Victim of WEP, worried about GPO
Trying to make ends meet in Massachusetts

In normal circumstances I would receive Social Security benefits of $1,000/month for the 20 years I cared for my children and served as a school/community volunteer.

However, the partial retirement I receive for the 16 years I taught disqualifies me from receiving any of this earned dependent spousal benefit which my husband paid for. As a divorcee I am finding it difficult to survive on a partial retirement.

Could you survive on a partial retirement?
Dismal retirement in Illinois

- “My late husband & I worked a total of 78 professional years.”
- “My annual retirement of $22,392 is hardly regal after 37 years teaching.”

“Yet, this prevents me from receiving survivor benefits from Social Security.”

Victim of GPO
Paid $90,000 in SS taxes

Government invests my money

I will not even receive a bit of interest from this “investment” in my future.
Social Security is inequitable

We seek a fair system with an equal standard of distribution for all earned Social Security credits.
Our Goal

Repeal the GPO & WEP

H.R. 1332
To amend title II of the Social Security Act to repeal the Government Pension Offset & Windfall Elimination Provision.

108 cosponsors in House
112th Congress
Cost of justice

The **cost to repeal** the GPO & WEP is 2% of the overall Social Security costs paid to recipients each year.

Information at http://www.ssa.gov/
Why care... if retirement **not in near future**?

Financial planning is part of life

Law to inform employees of GPO/WEP ONLY applies to those hired after Jan. 1, 2005.
Divorce is not uncommon in today’s society. Knowledge of GPO/WEP is critical to proper division of assets.
Single lifestyle common

Today 1 in 4 households

Can she make end meet?
Life is full of surprises

At some point, many lose their spouse. For women, chances are high & if so, they will lose much or all of their survivor benefits.

Is a precarious lifestyle what we want for our family members?
We need **action now or ...**

GPO/WEP will continue another 30 years
Why should other states care?

- Today’s society is mobile.
- Many move from state to state & job to job
- GPO/WEP affects people in every state.
What is ssfairness.com?

A nation wide all-volunteer group of active & retired public service employees, working to REPEAL GPO/WEP.

TOGETHER, we can unlock the hold on our earned benefits.
YOU can make a difference!

Be the voice for change

Sign up on ssfairness.com for Action Alerts

Then....Talk, talk, talk, write, write, write!

and ..... Do not give up!
Yes, with YOUR HELP
Fairness can prevail

“**Alone** we can do so little;

**Together** we can do so much.”  Helen Keller
Dedication

Produced by ssfairness.com for the benefit of all who have dedicated their lives to serving our country & deserve to be honored, not demeaned for their undying efforts. Hoping soon they will be recognized and their rights restored.

More than 1 million affected

Estimates vary according to source

Changes to PowerPoint Should be approved.