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“Social Security Fairness Act” Introduced in the House *H.R. 141: Repeal of WEP and GPO*

Chuck Canterbury, National President of the Fraternal Order of Police, welcomed the introduction of H.R. 141, the “Social Security Fairness Act,” in the U.S. House of Representatives.

“This has been a top legislative priority for the FOP for many years and we wanted to make sure it was introduced at the very start of this Congress,” Canterbury said. “We are very pleased that Representative Davis is again leading the charge to repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset.”

The bill was re-introduced in the House by Representatives Rodney L. Davis (R-IL), along with more than 19 other original cosponsors. The bill would repeal both the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO) in current Social Security law. In the previous Congress. The bill garnered 195 cosponsors, only 23 less than a majority of the House.

The Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) affects workers who spent some time in jobs not covered by Social Security and also worked other jobs where they paid Social Security taxes long enough to qualify for retirement benefits. The provision has a disproportionate effect on law enforcement officers who retire earlier than most other public employees and are more likely to begin a second career after they leave law enforcement. Officers in this position are penalized and may have their Social Security benefit reduced by up to sixty (60%) percent.

“The WEP substantially reduces a benefit that workers had included and counted on when planning their retirement and it substantially penalizes lower paid public employees with short careers or, like many retired law enforcement officers, those whose careers are evenly split inside and outside the Social Security system,” Canterbury explained. “This is a loss of benefits to which they are entitled, not an adjustment for a ‘windfall.’”

Like the WEP, the Government Pension Offset was adopted to shore up the finances of the Social Security trust fund. This “offset” law reduces by two-thirds the benefit received by surviving spouses who also collect a government pension.

“Nine out of ten times,” Canterbury said, “this so-called ‘offset’ completely eliminates the spousal benefit even though the covered spouse paid Social Security taxes for many years, thereby earning the right to these benefits.”

“The WEP and GPO provisions do not eliminate a windfall for workers, instead they have proved to be a windfall for the Federal government at the expense of public employees. That’s not right and it’s not fair,” he said. “Congress should repeal these inequitable provisions and pass the ‘Social Security Fairness Act.’”

The Fraternal Order of Police is the largest law enforcement labor organization in the United States, with more than 345,000 members.