



11 January 2007

The Honorable Howard Berman
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Berman,

I am writing on behalf of the membership of the Fraternal Order of Police to advise you of our continuing, strong support for H.R. 82, the "Social Security Fairness Act."

Your bill, which would repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO) in current Social Security law, is one of the top legislative priorities of the Fraternal Order of Police.

We believe, as you do, that this is an issue of fairness. When the WEP was enacted in 1983, its stated purpose was to remove a "windfall" for persons who spent some time in jobs not covered by Social Security (like public employees) and who also worked other jobs where they paid Social Security taxes long enough to qualify for retirement benefits. This provision has created a very real inequity for many public employees, particularly police officers, who retire earlier than other government employees to begin second careers which require them to pay into the Social Security system. Law enforcement officers who have second careers face a sixty percent (60%) cut to their Social Security benefits. This is a reduction of a benefit to which they are entitled because they paid into the system—not an adjustment for a "windfall."

Similarly, the GPO offsets the Social Security benefit to which a spouse or widow(er) is entitled by two-thirds of the monthly amount of any government pension that they might receive. For example, the widow of a retired law enforcement officer who collected a government pension of \$1,200 would be *ineligible* to collect her widow's benefit of \$600. Two-thirds of \$1,200 is \$800, which is greater than the spouse's benefit of \$600, thus making her unable to collect it. If the spouse's benefit was \$900, she would collect only \$100, because \$800 would be "offset" by her government pension. Again, the FOP believes this is a matter of fairness and that the offset scheme currently in place penalizes those employees least able to afford it. Law enforcement officers are especially affected because, like many public employees, they are not part of the Social Security system.

I applaud you for your continued leadership on this issue and will do everything I can to assist you in moving this bill forward. If I can be of any help, please do not hesitate to contact me or Executive Director Jim Pasco through my Washington office.

Sincerely,

Chuck Canterbury
National President