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November 19, 2024

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of our 3 million members and the 50 million students they serve, we strongly urge you to pass the Social Security Fairness Act (H.R. 82/S. 597) during this Congress. Long a top priority for our members, this bipartisan bill fully repeals the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) that have robbed more than 2.8 million retirees of Social Security benefits they have earned. Votes on this issue may be included in NEA's report card for the 118th Congress.

H.R. 82 passed the House overwhelmingly last week—by a vote of 327-75—and has 62 cosponsors in the Senate. Now, the Senate must prioritize passage of the companion bill, S. 597.

The WEP reduces the retirement, disability, spousal, and survivor benefits of people who work in jobs in which they pay Social Security taxes and jobs in which they do NOT pay Social Security taxes—for example, someone who takes part-time or summer jobs to make ends meet. The 6 million workers and 2 million retirees affected by the WEP—some of whom have paid into Social Security for two decades—include educators, postal workers, firefighters, law enforcement officers, and program staff at state, county, and municipal agencies.

The GPO slashes the Social Security spousal or survivor benefits of people who also get a pension based on federal, state, or local government employment NOT covered by Social Security. Two-thirds of the pension amount is deducted from the Social Security benefit—for someone getting a \$1,500 pension, for example, the Social Security benefit is lowered by \$1,000. About 700,000 retirees are affected—and more than 70 percent of them lose their entire spousal or survivor benefit.

The GPO and WEP discourage people from becoming educators, especially those in mid-career who stand to lose Social Security benefits they have already earned. That, in turn, can adversely affect the quality of the education our students receive and contribute to the educator shortage facing our nation.

We strongly urge you to pass the Social Security Fairness Act during the 118th Congress.

Sincerely,

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association