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February 28, 2017

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the three million members of the National Education Association and the students they serve, we strongly urge you to co-sponsor and support the Social Security Fairness Act of 2017 (H.R.1205), which would fully repeal both the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP). Together, the GPO and WEP deprive nearly 9 million hard-working Americans of the Social Security benefits they have earned—educators, police officers, firefighters, and other employees of state and local governments who dedicate their lives to public service.

The GPO reduces, by two-thirds, the Social Security spousal or survivor benefits of people not covered by Social Security themselves—for example, an educator with a pension of \$900 per month and a spouse covered by Social Security loses \$600 per month, her entire spousal benefit. The impact is harshest for those who can least afford the loss: lower-income women. Once the GPO kicks in, some have so little money they must turn to food stamps. More than 7 million people are affected by the GPO, including 6.4 million state and local government employees and 615,000 Social Security beneficiaries. (Congressional Research Service, [Social Security: The Government Pension Offset \(GPO\)](#), Congressional Research Service, April 2014)

The WEP reduces, by up to 50 percent, the Social Security retirement, disability, spousal, or survivor benefits of people who work in jobs covered by Social Security and jobs NOT covered by Social Security over the course of their careers—for example, educators and other dedicated public servants who must take part-time or summer jobs to make ends meet. About 1.7 million Social Security beneficiaries are affected by the WEP. (Congressional Research Service, [Social Security: The Windfall Elimination Provision \(WEP\)](#), May 2016)


The following excerpt from a letter to NEA is but one example of the devastating impact the GPO and WEP can have:

My husband was diagnosed with glioblastoma, the most aggressive type of brain cancer. After surgery, radiation and chemotherapy, his sight was affected so he could no longer drive or read. Therefore, he could no longer work as a real estate appraiser. We lived on my teacher retirement pension, my small Social Security benefit (\$250 a month before Medicare), and his Social Security check of \$1,600. It was an adjustment having one income totally lost, but with careful management and no unforeseen unexpected expenses we could do it. My husband lost his battle in April. Within two weeks of his death his

Social Security benefit no longer was coming. After a phone interview with a Social Security representative, I found out that I would see none of it. Now my income was almost cut in half again. Trying to deal with his death was compounded immeasurably by this huge loss financially. I still wonder how I am going to make it. My husband worked all his life and paid into Social Security. He was in the Marines and the Army and was a Vietnam vet. I worked as a teacher of young children most of my life as well as other jobs to earn my Social Security benefit. The GPO and the WEP are devastating to me. What can I do to help get these repealed?—Heidi from Maine

Repealing the GPO and WEP is a priority for NEA and our members. We strongly urge you to co-sponsor and support the Social Security Fairness Act of 2017 (H.R.1205), which would fully repeal both the GPO and WEP.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marc Egan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association