

NEA-Retired Legislative Advocacy Committee

The NEA Retired Legislative Advocacy Committee members are in the process of contacting retired state presidents to request a list of **best practices for legislative activities** their state has found to be successful. The information collected will be compiled into a document to be shared with each state. **Thank you for sharing your information when contacted. If no one reaches out to you, please email me.**

Now that the election is behind us and the new members of the House and Senate have been seated, the Legislative Committee will monitor bills introduced regarding retirees' concerns: Social Security, Medicare, CPI-E, GPO/WEP, and Pensions.

For your convenience, a brief description of CPI-E and GPO/WEP appears below.

CPI-E Experimental Consumer Price Index The CPI-E is essentially a price index for the elderly. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) developed the CPI-E, which measures price changes in a basket of goods and services relevant to Americans 62 years of age and older. The CPI-E composition is different from other BLS indexes, including the consumer price index for urban consumers (CPI-U) and the consumer price index for wage earners and clerical workers (CPI-W). For example, health care costs account for 11 percent of the CPI-E and only 5.6 percent of the CPI-W. Advocates argue that Social Security cost of living increases (COLA) should reflect a price index such as the CPI-E that provides an accurate gauge of the rate of inflation relevant to retirees. Currently, Social Security COLA increases reflect the CPI-W--not the CPI-E.

GPO/WEP Social Security's Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) penalize educators, police officers, and other state and local government employees who dedicate their lives to public service. According to the Congressional Research Service, the WEP affects 1.9 million people while the GPO affects 695,000 people.

GPO/WEP IMPACT

- ▶ The WEP reduces the **Social Security retirement, disability, spousal, or 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. Educators who take part-time or summer jobs to make ends meet are often unfairly affected by GPO/WEP.
- ▶ The GPO reduces the **Social Security spousal or survivor benefits** of people who get a government pension (federal, state, or local) but did NOT pay Social Security taxes themselves. Two-thirds of the government pension is deducted from the Social Security benefit—for example, if your monthly government pension is \$600, your Social Security spousal or survivor benefit is reduced by \$400. If two-thirds of your

government pension is more than your Social Security benefit, you could lose your Social Security benefit.

- ▶ These offsets **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. (From NEA Center for Advocacy)
- ▶ Should you have questions or concerns, please email me at joannsmi@yahoo.com. You may reach me by text or voice at 423.914.2818.