

Repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset

The California Retired Teachers Association supports the repeal of the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) to protect the benefits of educators who entered teaching as a second career, and the Government Pension Offset (GPO) to protect the survivor benefit.

The WEP reduces benefits that were paid for as part of the Social Security payroll tax. This benefit was created to ensure that a worker was not put into poverty. The WEP can lead to a significant reduction of the Social Security benefits that were earned and paid for.

The survivor benefit was paid for by the Social Security earner as part of the Social Security payroll tax. The survivor benefit was created to ensure that the surviving spouse was not put into poverty. The GPO eliminates the survivor benefit even with a modest public pension. When the GPO is applied to the survivor benefit, it can often relegate the surviving spouse into poverty conditions.

The WEP reduces the ability to recruit private industry workers as second career teachers to bring their skills and knowledge to California's classrooms. This transfer of knowledge is particularly important in some of the high technology areas for our high schools and community colleges.

Women are disproportionately impacted by the WEP and GPO in California. Approximately 72 percent of teachers in California are women who receive less service overall than men due to their disproportionate role as the primary caretakers of children and seniors in their family.

Of those impacted by the GPO nationally, 54 percent were spouses and 46 percent were widows or widowers. Out of the total potentially beneficiaries, 72 percent lose all Social Security benefits, leaving those impacted without a safety net.

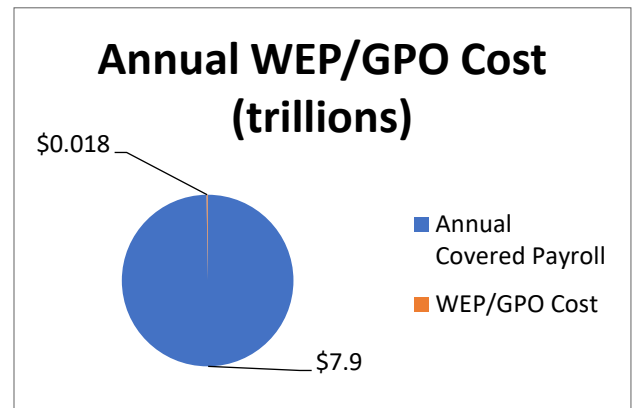
The harsh fiscal impact of the WEP/GPO is the number one cause of plummeting a retired teacher into low-income and poverty status.

Covered Payroll (Total salary and wages used for Social Security contributions)

Annual Covered Payroll = \$7.9 trillion

Annual Social Security Cost = \$1.145 trillion

Annual Combined Cost of WEP/GPO Repeal = \$18.2 billion



Teachers' Voices:

"I have depleted my savings by supplementing my teachers pension since I retired in order to cover my bills. I now must sell my house. The Social Security widows' benefit would have saved me and would help me now. Please repeal the GPO/WEP."
– Laurie B.

"It is unfair and penalizes those who have exerted extra efforts to earn income for their families. While I worked for 35 years in California's public education system, I concurrently worked for 20 years as an adjunct professor in the public and private university system in California. During those 20 years, I contributed fully, 100%, as required into the Social Security system. We should not be penalized by having our earned pensions from that system reduced as currently exists." – Joe A.

California Retired Teachers Association

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Teachers' Voices: How the Social Security Penalties Affect Retirees

If I had changed jobs in the private sector and entered a new retirement plan, I wouldn't have lost the previous one or had it reduced. Why doesn't that apply to public servants? - Linda L.

It seems simple to me. I paid into two systems and should be entitled to collect from both systems. I am not asking for something I HAVE NOT EARNED only for the SOCIAL SECURITY that I had deducted from my salary. It is not ethical to keep from me what I have earned.
- Jane M.

I worked my way through college and into a master's degree which ultimately led me to teaching. I also worked many summers trying to make ends meet. Throughout all these non-teaching jobs I paid in to Social Security, or, should I say, had Social Security withheld from each and every paycheck. Now that I am retired and drawing on CalSTRS, until the law changes, I cannot receive the Social Security money I am owed. This makes absolutely no sense to me. Why should I be penalized as a teacher for the money I made from other jobs which withheld Social Security? I tell students that if they take up teaching in California, they will not get access to the Social Security money that was taken from them until the law changes, and no doubt some will choose to belong to a profession that does not punish you by arbitrarily keeping your hard-earned withholdings. - Robin F.

I worked nearly 15 years and paid the maximum Social Security payments all outside of my public school teacher experience. Of course, I paid into the CalSTRS retirement program for the 22 years I worked as a teacher and administrator. When I retired my Social Security earned benefit was reduced by 50%. I do not understand why the federal government took away 7.5 years of my benefit, just because I was a public school teacher in the state of California. Something is truly discriminatory, and I do not believe my government had a right to not grant me my full earned social security benefits.
- Gary C.

I was a single mother raising two sons and a teacher. However, I worked every summer outside my teaching job, held second and third jobs sometimes to provide for my family. I paid into Social Security and worked my rear off. Why shouldn't I collect my share? - Karon W.

My husband and I are affected by WEP/GPO. He is a veteran and worked for the Federal Government as a GS 13 and I as a public school teacher. We also managed a landscaping business for 22 years and paid into Social Security. However, we are affected by WEP/GPO. It is very unfair, and our pensions do not keep up with the cost of living.
- Mr. & Mrs. Shaub

I retired from STRS and found I needed extra money and had the opportunity to work for a private university. Naturally, they take Social Security out of my check each month, but that is money I can never claim. Why? Because of the WEP/GPO. Is that not grand theft from me by way of the U.S. Government? They take it and they keep it!
- Ruth R.

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