

FINAL UPDATE ON HOUSE DISCHARGE PETITION TO FORCE A VOTE ON WEP/GPO REPEAL

On September 7, 2006 U.S. Rep. Lloyd Doggett (D-TX) introduced H. Res. 987, a discharge petition which would allow floor consideration of H.R. 147, the "Social Security Fairness Act." H.R. 147 would eliminate the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP). The GPO and WEP reduce the Social Security benefits of more than a million teachers, police officers, and other public servants across the country. Although the Social Security Fairness Act has 323 bipartisan sponsors (an overwhelming majority of the House), the House leadership has refused to allow the House to vote on it.

The introduction of H. Res. 987 is a procedural maneuver to force a vote on H.R. 147. Since the House leadership refused to act on H. Res. 987 by September 20, Rep. Doggett began collecting signatures on a "discharge petition," which would remove H. Res. 987 from the jurisdiction of the Committee on Rules and bring it directly to the floor for consideration by the full House. If the petition garners 218 signatures (a majority of the House), a motion to discharge the Committee on Rules from further consideration of H. Res. 987 is placed on the Discharge Calendar. After seven legislative days on that calendar, H. Res. 987 can be considered on the next discharge day (the second or fourth Monday of a month). If H. Res. 987 receives a majority of votes, the House would then consider the "Social Security Fairness Act."

The "Social Security Fairness Act" has been bottled up in a subcommittee by the House leadership since it was introduced in January 2005, despite garnering the support of 323 co-sponsors. After 20 years of efforts, we finally have the opportunity to repeal two unjust offsets that drastically cut public safety officers' Social Security benefits. NAPO hopes that the House of Representatives will hear the voices of America's public safety community and sign the discharge petition to bring the bill to the House floor for a vote.

ACTION UPDATE: As of November 15, the start of the House's Thanksgiving Recess, there were only 122 members signed on to the discharge petition. This is 96 signatures short of the 218 needed to force a vote on the the "Social Security Fairness Act." The current status of the petition can be seen at <http://clerk.house.gov/109/lrc/pd/petitions/Dis15.htm>. Unfortunately, members cannot add their name to the petition until the House returns from recess on December 4, which is the last Monday that the discharge petition can be considered in the 109th Congress. While NAPO finds it unacceptable that the petition was not able to get enough signatures, even with H.R. 147 having 323 co-sponsors, the petition did receive more signatures than it did in the 108th Congress. Progress is being made to bring about the total repeal of the GPO/WEP, and we can only continue to push the next Congress and its newly elected leadership to pass the "Social Security Fairness Act."

NAPO continues to fight to protect the retirement security of the law enforcement community and we thank you for all of your efforts in helping us push for the passage of H.R. 147.

