



And the hits just keep on coming

Retirees receiving their February 2011 annuity deposit saw their annuity had decreased approximately \$32 for IRS withholding. Most opined that since the Bush tax cut had been extended, they should not be paying more taxes. Unfortunately, this is not a tax increase but a return to the tax withholding schedule that was in effect in 2008 before President Obama authorized a \$400 tax cut for all retirees. Those also on Social Security received a \$250 cut plus an additional \$150 under this provision. On December 31, 2010, this tax reduction expired and the old IRS withholding rates returned. More information on this is available on the NALC website, nalc.org.

Retirees in our organization and in this country who worked long and hard for their retirement years are seeing that lifestyle shortchanged by economic conditions they did not cause and in fact had no part in at all. Now those benefits are being looked at as excessive and a drain on our nation's budget.

In my December article, I spoke of my concern that public and federal workers could be targeted by the incoming powers in Congress. It appears my concerns were understated at best. The recently enacted two-year freeze of federal salaries and talk of subsequent downsizing of both employees and their benefits should rankle the feathers of every public employee in this country. State and local governments are looking at reducing costs and cutting back on teacher, police and firefighter salaries and retirement benefits. Our citizens are being misled by constant attacks and misinformation intended to convince them that government workers are the cause of this country's and their individual current problems.

Cutting federal, state or municipal workers helps unemployment because...? I do not see that helping the currently unemployed. How cutting federal, state and municipal retirement helps those without these benefits is a mystery to me. How does cutting some of the very benefits that the unemployed and uninsured receive some assistance from help them?

The shame is that our elected leaders, through deregulation and relaxed code enforcement, allowed Wall Street and the country's financial institutions to drive us into a deep recession. Rather than hold those responsible

for their actions, they bailed them out and now that their cronies are making billions again, they have turned their attention to the remaining workers in an effort to help recoup the monetary damages caused by the very ones that they have rewarded.

As workers and retirees, we need to pay close attention to the efforts to balance the budget and blame the deficits on those remaining employed. We need to stop letting the one-sided Fox News agenda be our only source of information. We should listen to multiple and varied networks and see what is truly up for debate. We should then do our homework to see what is in our best interest. Do not let someone else dictate your beliefs or thoughts on any subject until you know and believe it is true and best for you, your family and your friends.

With the publication of the February *Postal Record*, I want to thank all who contributed to COLCPE during this past year. To the retirees, I thank you for your support of our Legislative Department through your contributions. We are in perilous times and all of our members should be contributing toward protecting our future. The events that are being discussed by our elected officials are so important to each of us that we cannot sit on the sidelines and allow someone else to determine our fate without input.

The Office of Personnel Management continues to struggle with timely completion of new retirees' annuities. And while they have made some inroads on the backlog of applications, the new applications that occur this time each year will undoubtedly cause further delays. Again, each member who is considering retirement should try to have a five-month reserve of his or her anticipated retirement income available prior to retiring. Saving 440 hours of annual leave for payment at retirement will be a great start toward that goal. ✉

NALC Retirement Department
Toll-free number: 800-424-5186
Available Monday, Wednesday and Thursday only
from 10 a.m. to noon and from 2 to 4 p.m. (Eastern time)
This toll-free number is answered ONLY during these hours on the days indicated.