News from Washington

Senate subcommittee holds hearing on WEP/GPO repeal

n June 7, the Senate Subcommittee on Social Security, Pensions, and Family Policy held a hearing on the Social Security Fairness Act (S. 597). The bill would repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO), parts of Social Security law that unfairly reduce, and sometimes eliminate, Social Security benefits of public employees, including letter carriers, who have earned pension benefits from public employee pension plans such as the Civil Service Retirement System.

The hearing was held at the Columbus Firefighters IAFF Local 67 union hall in Columbus, OH. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) leads the bipartisan bill with Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME).

Seven witnesses, all from Ohio, testified at the hearing. They were Brian Steel, president, Fraternal Order of Police Capital City Lodge #9; George Sakellakis, director of organization, Ohio Patrolmen's Benevolent Association; Jamie Patton, Buckeye Sheriffs; Carl Jordan, pension and disability representative, Ohio Association of Professional Firefighters; Barb Ward, special needs bus driver; Diane Gibson, retired teacher; and Cheryl Williams, school secretary.

In his opening statement, Sen. Brown thanked the witnesses for sharing their experiences, called the reduction of benefits of public servants unfair, and mentioned that the WEP and GPO make it difficult to recruit and retain employees in the public sector.

NALC President Brian L. Renfroe and Ohio State Association of Letter Carriers President Jeff Kranz submitted comments to the subcommittee explaining how these provisions harm letter carriers (see letter above).

Fifty-nine senators are co-sponsoring the Senate bill, and 322 members have

signed onto the House version.

The Senate field hearing follows two subcommittee hearings in the House and growing momentum for the legislation.

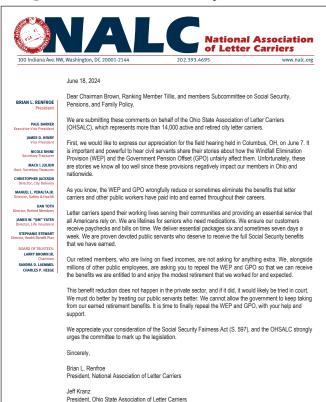
"NALC appreciates the subcommittee holding a hearing on this critical legislation," President Renfroe said. "It is beyond time for Congress to right this wrong, and we urge the House and Senate to pass this bill."

Ask Congress to support the Protect Our Letter Carriers Act

As this magazine was going to print, the bipartisan Protect Our Letter Carriers Act (H.R. 7629/S. 4356) had 89 co-sponsors in the House. Sens. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and Josh Hawley (R-MO) introduced a companion Senate bill in May. All letter carriers are encouraged to visit nalc.org/action and ask their members of Congress to co-sponsor the legislation.

The bill would increase federal prosecution rates for crimes against letter carriers, strengthen sentencing guidelines for these crimes, and provide \$7 billion in funding for the Postal Service to secure its infrastructure.

President Renfroe helped get the message out about the crime issue,



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and the need to support the legislation to combat it, through an interview with the NBC division of 11 NBC-owned stations around the country, which are in top markets including Washington, DC; New York City; Chicago; Dallas and Los Angeles. Among others communicating that message recently were Las Vegas Branch 2502 President **Paul Peterman** on Univision and Las Vegas public radio.

The August recess is an excellent opportunity to schedule in-district meetings with your members of Congress. Letter carriers are encouraged to contact district offices and schedule meetings with lawmakers to educate them about this bill and ask for their support. PR