



NEA-ALASKA

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February 12, 2024

Honorable Representative Alyse Galvin
State Capitol Room 405
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Galvin,

On behalf of the NEA-Alaska, I am writing in support of House Joint Resolution 18 (HJR 18).

Alaska's educators support repealing the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP).

According to the Congressional Research Service, Alaska has the highest percentage of WEP-affected beneficiaries of any state with 11.7% of all beneficiaries and 15.2% of all retired workers.ⁱ

Alaska educators join the profession from a variety of backgrounds, whether directly out of college, after serving in the military, or as a second career. In many cases, educators supplement their income by working second jobs, running a small business, or pursuing seasonal employment during the summer. Through their secondary employment, these individuals earn Social Security benefits which are automatically deducted from their paychecks. However, as a result of their enrollment in TRS/PERS, they are subject to GPO-WEP.

Alaska's educators and public servants hired after 2006 are particularly vulnerable to both of these provisions. Those hired after 2006 are not eligible for a pension but rather have a 401k style Defined Contribution (DC) retirement. Not only is the GPO-WEP unfair and impactful to retirees with state pensions, but also to any member of the Alaska Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) and Teacher Retirement System (TRS) who do not have a defined benefit pension.

These offsets penalize people who have dedicated at least part of their career to working with our students as educators. As Alaska continues to struggle to attract and retain a high-quality

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educator workforce, GPO-WEP makes this more challenging as second career prospective hires will lose a portion of their previously earned Social Security benefits.

Thank you for introducing HJR 18 and sending a clear message to Alaska's Congressional Delegation that the Alaska Legislature supports their efforts to repeal the GPO-WEP.

Thank you for your consideration,

Tom Klaameyer, President, NEA-Alaska

¹ Congressional Research Service Social Security: The Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) Updated February 13, 2023 <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RS/98-35>