

The National Council of Social Security Management Associations, Inc.

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- **Congressional Action Related to the Social Security Program for the Period of October 6 – 17, 2003**

Below is a compilation of recent congressional action related to the Social Security Program. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or would like us to provide additional information regarding any of the measures.

H.R. 3279

Title: To amend title II of the Social Security Act and the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for an election by individuals eligible for old-age insurance benefits under such title to waive payment of benefits based on their work record, to provide for income tax deductions based on the actuarial present value of benefits foregone by reason of such an election, and to provide that special Government obligations issued exclusively for purchase by the Social Security Trust Funds shall bear interest at the average market yield then prevailing for comparable obligations issued in the private sector.

Sponsor: Rep. Otter, C. L. (Butch) [ID-1] (introduced 10/8/2003) **Cosponsors:** (none)

Latest Major Action: 10/8/2003 Referred to House committee. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

- **Congressional Action Related To Civil Service Issues for the Period of October 6 – 17, 2003**

Below is a compilation of recent congressional action related to civil service issues. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or would like us to provide additional information regarding any of the measures.

H.R.3267

Title: To eliminate certain inequities in the Civil Service Retirement System and the Federal Employees' Retirement System with respect to the computation of benefits for law enforcement officers, firefighters, air traffic controllers, nuclear materials couriers, members of the Supreme Court and Capitol police, and their survivors, and for other purposes.

Sponsor: Rep. Cummings, Elijah E. [MD-7] (introduced 10/8/2003) **Cosponsors:** (none)

Latest Major Action: 10/8/2003 Referred to House committee. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Government Reform.

Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-MD) spoke from the House floor about the “Federal Employees’ Benefit Equity Act of 2003”, which he is sponsoring (from the *Congressional Record*, p. E2022).

“Mr. Speaker, I rise today to encourage my colleagues to join me in cosponsoring the “Federal Employees’ Benefits Equity Act of 2003.” I reintroduced this very important legislation that works to eliminate a number of inequities found in the computation of benefits for law enforcement officers, firefighters, nuclear material couriers and members of the Supreme Court police under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) and the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS).

Additionally, this bill would correct inequities resulting from the court case *Wassenaar v. Office of Personnel Management (OPM)*, regarding benefits for survivors of law enforcement officers and firefighters who die as federal employees.

Under current CSRS and FERS statutes, certain employees immediately qualify for an enhanced annuity if separated from service after reaching age 50 and completing 20 years of service. This enhanced annuity, however, requires that these employees make retirement contributions that are 0.5 percent higher than those of the average employee.

Some employees are forced to retire due to disability, or involuntary separation (not for cause), before reaching age 50. In these cases, employees receive only a regular annuity even if he or she has had 20 years of service. This legislation remedies this problem by providing enhanced annuities to all employees who have given 20 years of service. Those forced to retire, at any age, due to involuntary separation or disability are covered by this legislation. The bill also allows for the refund of the additional 0.5 percent retirement contribution, with interest, when employees in these occupations retire or die before attaining eligibility for the enhanced annuity.

During the 106th and 107th Congresses, many federal employees contacted my office stating their concerns about the retroactive language in the bill. I listened to their concerns and worked with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to address this issue. This bill is no longer retroactive. I am extremely pleased this bill will capture federal employees from the day of enactment.”

The Washington Report
418 C Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002
202-547-8530/FAX 202-547-8532
Contact: Sara Garland or Rachel Emmons
e-mail: sarag@greystone-group.com or rachele@greystone-group.com