

These provisions are unfairly penalizing the men and women who contribute the vital services that sustain and improve our communities.

With the retirement population continuing to grow, this issue is of increasing importance to millions of Americans and is not going to go away. I have been contacted by thousands, representing every segment of our community, and I am continually saddened and angered by the stories that I hear. Those who are affected by the GPO and WEP are hardworking Americans that do not deserve to be denied the benefits of a Social Security system that they have already contributed to.

A widow relayed the story of how she and her husband planned their retirement believing that each would be able to take care of their bills should one of them pass. She was stunned to find out when she became widowed that she would not be allowed to collect her husband's full survivor benefits because she collects a small pension from her job as an elementary school teacher in Marshfield. Sadly, she was forced to sell the home where she had raised her family because she could no longer afford it.

A single mother of three on Cape Cod with two full-time jobs as a nurse and teacher wrote me of her dilemma. She has made many sacrifices to independently support her children. She consistently paid into her teacher's retirement fund and Social Security for decades hoping to be able to eventually retire without worry in her later years. She recently found out she will not be allowed to collect both of the full retirement benefits she earned and was counting on.

I have heard from a 63-year-old widow who works for the City of Quincy. She would like to retire before her 70th birthday but cannot afford to do so. Because of her participation in the City retirement program, her Social Security benefits will be immediately and drastically reduced.

A municipal retiree in Plymouth wrote me about his concerns with the rising price of gas and medical expenses. He supports a repeal of the GPO and WEP so that he may supplement his already meager retirement income with his Social Security benefits.

I have heard from police officers and firefighters from all over my district who put their lives on the line each and every day. These brave men and women will not be allowed to collect their full Social Security benefits upon retirement.

These stories are very real, and are just a small sample of the thousands of letters that I have received on this issue.

This is not just about senior citizens who worked all their lives believing they were responsibly planning ahead for retirement. This is not just about retirees finding themselves unable to make ends meet, concerned that they may not be able to afford to heat their homes this winter or buy the medications they need.

It's about retired and widowed public servants, who are denied access to their deceased spouse's Social Security benefits because they chose public service as a career.

It's about penalizing honest, hard-working people who dedicated their careers to public service. At a time when our Nation is searching for talented and dedicated teachers, nurses and other public servants—this penalty discourages the best and the brightest from

serving in our community. Madam Speaker, the time is long overdue for Congress to resolve this issue.

I want to urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 82, the Social Security Fairness Act which would repeal both the GPO and WEP. In addition, I'd like to urge you to support H.R. 2772, the Public Servant Retirement Protection Act, which would eliminate the WEP and establish a more equitable formula for calculating Social Security benefits.

Support for these two pieces of legislation has grown significantly each year and it is imperative that they see long-awaited debate in committee and on the floor of Congress.

RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF CONGRESSWOMAN MAXINE WATERS TO SOUTH AFRICA

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2008

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Congresswoman MAXINE WATERS on receiving the Order of the Companions of OR Tambo Silver Award.

Since 1980, Congresswoman WATERS has worked tirelessly to improve the situation of the South African people. During the long reign of the apartheid regime, Representative WATERS organized marches, participated in rallies and welcomed countless antiapartheid leaders to the United States. Spearheading the national divestment movement, Congresswoman WATERS persuaded countless American corporations to withhold investing money in South Africa until apartheid ceased to exist. When South Africa held its first free elections 1994, Representative WATERS was asked to be a member of the official U.S. delegation that attended the inauguration of the country's first black president, Nelson Mandela. Clearly, Congresswoman MAXINE WATERS played a vital role in ending apartheid.

In my opinion, there is no one more deserving of one of South Africa's most prestigious awards. Congresswoman MAXINE WATERS devoted her career to ensuring that all people no matter their origin, race or culture, have the chance to experience freedom.

IN HONOR OF GABRIELLE THOMPSON OF BUFFALO, MINNESOTA: RECIPIENT OF THE PRUDENTIAL SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY AWARD

HON. MICHELE BACHMANN

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2008

Mrs. BACHMANN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend seventh grader Gabrielle Thompson of Buffalo Community Middle School for her extraordinary commitment to her community and her compassion for young cancer patients. This week, Gabrielle will be one of only 102 state honorees from across the Nation honored with the Prudential Spirit of Community Award.

Gabrielle has turned a difficult personal story into a story of healing and hope for chil-

dren facing a life with cancer. When she was only 4 years old, doctors removed a malignant tumor from Gabrielle's abdomen. Now, with that successful surgery not long behind her, Gabrielle has committed to helping others who find themselves in similar situations.

In addition to raising \$5,000 for cancer research selling luminaries and to drawing public attention to Buffalo's Relay for Life, Gabrielle has written a book to help children cope with cancer, "The ABCs of Childhood Cancer." Her book relates to children as only a young one can and relates to cancer patients as only one who has walked in their shoes can. But, in so many ways, her book demonstrates a young lady of startling maturity, grace, and poise.

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards were started in 1995 as a partnership between Prudential Financial and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). It is the Nation's largest youth recognition program based solely on volunteerism. Two high school and middle school students from each state and the District of Columbia are honored each year, with an additional 234 distinguished finalists also receiving recognition for their public service.

This year, in addition to Gabrielle, Shanna Decker, a senior at Plainview-Elgin-Millville High School, will represent the great state of Minnesota as recipients of the award for 2008. Shanna has also had a personal experience with cancer as a young child and has also turned her difficult life lesson into a powerful example of hope and courage for other young people in this situation, spending more than 300 hours a year visiting young cancer patients in the hospital.

An additional six outstanding Minnesota teens will be honored as Distinguished Finalists: Daniel Chahla of St. Paul, Carly Fischbeck of Inver Grove Heights, Joshua Hiben of Bloomington, Carissa Loehr of Eagan, Laura Maciosek of Minneapolis, and Aisha Moghul of Fridley. It is a true privilege to join Prudential, the NASSP, and their communities in honoring these outstanding examples of compassion and service. With all the regrettable news stories about the wayward path of today's youth, these young men and women renew our faith and refresh our hope.

HONORING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF MR. THOMAS J. COOPER, SR.

HON. JIM GERLACH

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2008

Mr. GERLACH. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a dedicated community volunteer from Chester County, Pennsylvania, who recently passed away, but whose service is still lauded and remembered.

Each year, the Downingtown Area Chamber of Commerce recognizes an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the community. This year, the Citizen of the Year Award will be presented posthumously to Thomas J. Cooper, Sr.

Mr. Cooper made substantial contributions to several community organizations throughout our region. He was very active with the Boy Scouts of America, serving as a Cubmaster and Den Leader for Hopewell Pack 8 for a