

THE PENSION RIGHT TO KNOW  
ACT

HON. JERRY WELLER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 18, 1999

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, do we not have a responsibility to help our constituents understand their benefits? As a large portion of today's population is nearing retirement, employer-sponsored retirement plans have increased in importance. And many people do not understand their benefits. It is an even greater problem when an employer unilaterally changes that plan, and minimal explanation is given.

I have some real concerns in these situations, and I believe we need to help our constituents understand their benefits when they are changed. The Wall Street Journal recently highlighted some of the information disclosure problems when companies change from a traditional pension plan to a cash-balance plan.

One particular situation involved a company who changed their plan and merely informed the employees that a change had occurred. One 49-year-old employee decided to look into this further, because he was thinking about his retirement. He discovered that while he was not going to lose any benefits, he was also not going to accrue any benefits for several years under this new plan. It was only through his efforts to learn more about it that he discovered this.

Now, let me point out that it is not the employer's fault, but the law's. That is why I have joined with Senator MOYNIHAN in introducing companion legislation to correct this problem.

The Pension Right to Know Act, H.R. 1176, will require increased disclosure of information to employees about their pension plan. It would require an explanation to the employee as to how their pension plan will be affected by any plan change. It will require an individual benefit statement for each employee showing how they, in particular, will be affected by this change. For some the change will be beneficial, but for others the change could affect how they plan for the future.

My colleagues, I believe we need to protect our constituents who may be expecting one thing, and then receive something very different. As employers make changes from various retirement plans to cash-balance plans, employees are left not understanding what changes have been made to their retirement plan.

We can help our citizens who are nearing retirement and thinking about their retirement savings program—and we can help them to understand.

Mr. Speaker, let us do what we can to help employees understand their options.

Let us work together. Let us solve this problem, and let us solve it together.

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

APPRECIATION OF THE HONORABLE IMATA KABUA, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

HON. ROBERT A. UNDERWOOD

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 18, 1999

Mr. UNDERWOOD. Mr. Speaker, last month I was privileged to travel with the House Resources Congressional Delegation to the Pacific Insular areas. Chairman DON YOUNG should be commended for providing this opportunity to Resource Committee members to educate themselves on the issues that confront the people of Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. In this regard our trip was a success and I hope that my colleagues who were fortunate to join the Young CODEL—Rep. DANA ROHRBACHER, Rep. JOHN DOOLITTLE, Rep. COLLIN PETERSON, Rep. KEN CALVERT, Rep. ENI FALEOMAVAEGA and Rep. DONNA CHRISTIAN-CHRISTENSEN—have gained a better understanding of Pacific Insular issues.

I would like to extend my appreciation to the people and leaders of each destination that the Young CODEL visited for their warm welcome and island hospitality. In my remarks today I would like to submit, for the record, the statement of the President Imata Kabua of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. I want to express my gratitude for his collaborative efforts on behalf of his country to advance the economic, educational, social and political needs of his people.

I also want to take this opportunity to state that I share President Kabua's desire for the House Resources Committee and the Congress to work closely in the renegotiations of the Compacts of Free Association with the United States which will commence later this year. I am hopeful that all issues can be addressed in the renegotiations and that concerns of all affected parties will be taken into consideration.

STATEMENT OF PRESIDENT IMATA KABUA  
U.S. CODEL MEETING WITH PRESIDENT KABUA  
AND HIS CABINET, FEBRUARY 20, 1999

Chairman Young, Members of the CODEL, staff, friends: It is indeed an honor and a pleasure for me to welcome you to the Republic of the Marshall Islands. After your long flight, I trust that you now have a better understanding of the vast distance of ocean and land that we cover every time we visit you in Washington, DC.

The people and government of the Marshall Islands have long considered the United States our close friend and ally. Our nations share commitments to freedom, democracy, world peace and well-being for all peoples. These shared commitments are enshrined in the Compact of Free Association, the U.S. Public Law that joined our nations in the strategic alliance.

As the President of the Marshall Islands, I can assure you that our nation is seriously committed to strengthening our mutually beneficial partnership.

Critical to our strategic partnership is our continued hosting of the already expanded military testing facilities on Kwajalein Atoll. I would be remiss if I failed to commu-

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nicate to you that our relationship with the U.S. military is the strongest it has ever been. We continue to work closely with the Department of Defense to enhance the military's important efforts on the atoll and in the region.

Chairman Young, I want to personally thank you and the members of your Committee for your efforts at extending to the Marshall Islands the assistance that honors the objectives of the Compact.

Specifically, I want to thank you for extending the Pell Grant to our students, providing FEMA support to help us cope with natural disasters and for continuing to recognize the agricultural and resettlement needs of the communities harmed the most by the U.S. Nuclear Weapons Testing Program. These actions signal to the Marshall Islands that the United States values our bilateral relationship.

Education remains our top priority along with health services for our people. We value the Federal programs and assistance in these areas and assure you that accountability and proper administration will always be our main focus.

I also want to thank you for the resolution that Chairman Ben Gilman, Delegate Eni Faleomavaega and you introduced last Congress. House Concurrent Resolution 92 stands as a testimony to the success of the bilateral relationship.

In a few moments, you will be hearing more about the Nitijela's corresponding resolutions, and this parliamentary body's shared appreciation of the points so eloquently stated in H. Con. Res. 92.

The RMI Government looks forward to engaging the U.S. Government in productive discussions to address certain provisions of the Compact of Free Association. Our designated negotiator is ready to meet with your designee to begin our discussions as soon as possible. It is our hope that you can encourage the Administration to expedite the appointment of the U.S. chief negotiator so we can begin this dialogue.

In advance of the upcoming Compact negotiations, our government would like to work closely with your Committee, the Members of the U.S. Congress and the U.S. government to address some outstanding issues that need to be resolved, specifically the "changed circumstances" issue provided for in Section 177, Article IX of the Compact and concerns we have surrounding Section 111(d).

The first Compact has taught us that the relationship works and that its continuation is important to both nations. The second Compact challenges us to think about the most appropriate and effective means to build on our mutual security and economic and social needs.

I would also like to make the CODEL aware of some of the positive actions the RMI government has undertaken. We have initiated major reforms and taken concrete steps to ensure progress in our nation-building efforts.

Over the past five years, we have successfully streamlined government, created an environment conducive for private sector and foreign investment and have taken important steps in building our nation's infrastructure to sustain economic growth and prosperity.

These efforts are empowering our people to participate in the world economy. We strongly believe that our continued partnership will assist us in meeting the challenges of the next century.

The RMI has also been aggressively working with other mutual allies in the Pacific