

along with the many other demands placed on Congress. He took a personal interest in the progress of Noxubee County and assisted us whenever possible. Brian's attention to detail and pride in his work was evident whether at his desk in the Cannon Building or during a much-deserved weekend break to fish the Shenandoah River. Brian Perry's presence on the Hill will be greatly missed by many Mississippians."—Brian Wilson, executive director, Noxubee Economic and Community Development Alliance

"It has truly been a pleasure to get to know Brian Perry during his tenure with Chip. He and I have developed a special friendship. I appreciate his intellect and character. He is an excellent writer and conscientious in his work. His public service has made a difference to our nation, our great state, and to Chip and our family. I will always be grateful."—Judge Charles W. Pickering, Sr.

Madam Speaker, Brian has provided wise counsel, effective communication and a passion for service to Mississippi. He served with poise throughout the aftermath of Katrina and in congressional and confirmation battles. I treasure his faith, reason and friendship. He has my deep respect and appreciation for all the contributions he has made and the work he has done. I wish him the very best and know he has a bright future communicating and fighting for good causes.

CONGRATULATING ISRAEL ON ITS 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE

**HON. JOHN M. MCHUGH**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2008

Mr. MCHUGH. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate and commend the State of Israel on the 60th anniversary of its independence. On May 14, 1948, Israel declared its independence. Within 11 minutes, the United States became the first nation to give de facto recognition to the State of Israel. America's friendship with Israel continues to this day. Having visited Israel several times, I know well that Israelis and Americans share the common values of peace, freedom and democracy.

The modern state of Israel is a safe haven for Jews from all corners of the world. Since its founding, Israel has been a home to Holocaust survivors and their descendants, as well as Jews fleeing oppression. While strides have been made to combat global anti-Semitism, I am disappointed that recent reports indicate a rise in anti-Semitism worldwide.

A strong and secure Israel is vital to America's national interest. Israelis know all too well the terror of indiscriminate homicide attacks by radical terrorists. The enemies of Israel have also targeted their attacks against Americans. The terrorist group Hamas is responsible for the deaths of at least 26 Americans, including teenagers and young children. In 1983 Hezbollah bombed the U.S. embassy in Beirut. Hezbollah was also involved in the bombing of the United States Marine barracks, in an attack that claimed the lives of 241 American servicemen. These groups operate with support and funding from Iran, a country whose

president has called for Israel to be "wiped off the map." Hamas continues to launch rockets into Israel, terrorizing innocent civilians living near the Gaza border. However, Israelis have shown tremendous courage in the face of these hostilities. Despite the constant threat of annihilation, Israelis have made the desert bloom. They have created a flourishing culture and society. Israel has also developed a thriving economy and is the world's leader in the development of many cutting edge industries. Israeli technology has even been used to help keep our troops safe in battle in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Madam Speaker, I join my colleagues in congratulating the State of Israel on its 60th anniversary, and express my sincere hope that the next 60 years come with peace and security for our close friend and ally.

CALLING ON CONGRESS TO REPEAL THE GOVERNMENT PENSION OFFSET AND WINDFALL ELIMINATION PROVISION

**HON. WILLIAM D. DELAHUNT**

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 1, 2008

Mr. DELAHUNT. Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak about an extremely important issue facing many retirees in Massachusetts. Throughout my career in the Congress, I have heard from thousands of my constituents who have been penalized by the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP).

Both of these laws currently require that a modified formula be used to calculate the amount of Social Security benefits a retired or disabled worker and/or the worker's family will receive if the worker also receives a pension from local, State or Federal employment not covered by Social Security. This has resulted in some unintended and unfair consequences.

Millions of public service workers in 15 States are allowed to opt out of the Social Security system and my home State of Massachusetts is one of them. Most of these workers are teachers, town and State employees, nurses, police officers and firefighters who are not required or allowed to pay into the Social Security program. Therefore, they do not collect Social Security benefits upon retirement.

However, the GPO and WEP also prevent public servants from receiving Social Security benefits that they earned through other, non-public service employment. Under these provisions, a widow or widower is denied a spousal benefit because their husband or wife was a public service employee. This is unfair and unacceptable.

Every year those who unselfishly give of themselves by serving others in their communities, find their retirement savings slashed by the GPO and WEP, simply because they left the private sector to serve the public. In Massachusetts alone, nearly 18,700 retirees are affected by the GPO, with more than a third of them being widows or widowers. As many as 32,000 individuals are affected by the WEP. These provisions are unfairly penalizing the men and women who contribute the vital serv-

ices 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