

U.S. Senator Bill Cassidy
Statement for the Record
“Keeping the Promise of Social Security for Ohio’s First Responders and Public Servants”
U.S. Senate Finance Committee, Subcommittee on Social Security
June 7, 2024

Police officers, firefighters, teachers, and other state and local workers play critical roles in communities across the nation. Yet, for many, their Social Security benefits are unfairly reduced simply for serving their local community.

State and local governments who provide certain pension benefits can opt their workforce out of Social Security without any input from their employees. But when these workers have second jobs, second careers, or married someone with a job participating in Social Security, they are unfairly punished for a choice their government made.

The Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO) are the provisions responsible for these unfair cuts. This is a problem for firefighters, who have an average retirement age of 52, before going onto second careers. It is a problem for police officers, who have an average retirement age of 55, before going onto second careers. And, it is a problem for teachers, as 20% of all teachers work a second job at any given time. Nearly three million Americans are harmed by WEP or GPO, including many Louisianans.

Louisiana has more first responders by population than any other state in the nation, meaning our state is disproportionately impacted by WEP and GPO.

Our tens of thousands of teachers are being hurt too. Not too long ago, I met with a retired Louisiana school teacher impacted by GPO. As she cried in my office, she could not understand why she was getting less in Social Security spousal benefits than if she had never worked at all. She felt that she was being punished for educating generations of Louisiana children. There is no public policy reason to treat our public servants this way.

This is why I am proud to be among the 57 U.S. Senators trying to repeal WEP and GPO. Our *Social Security Fairness Act* (S. 597) would ensure that all retired public sector workers can receive the full value of their Social Security benefits they or their spouse earned.

Congress is well overdue to repeal these harmful provisions. They should have never become law. We have an opportunity to fix it.