

## **FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE UPDATE - Maine's 2<sup>nd</sup> District Congressman Bruce Poliquin Joins Senator Susan Collins and 1<sup>st</sup> District Congresswoman Chellie Pingree in Supporting Legislation to Amend Provisions of the Social Security Act Affecting Maine Public Service Retirees**

Responding to personal contacts, letters, phone calls, and emails, on Monday, July 20, 2015, Congressman Poliquin became a co-sponsor of **H.R. 711, the Equal Treatment of Public Servants Act**. In a written statement released by his office, Congressman Poliquin noted that, "One of the greatest challenges facing our nation today is the preservation of Social Security for those who have worked hard for it and earned it. I'm especially concerned for those seniors who have worked in public service, as teachers, fireman, policemen, community workers, and state employees, who are being shorted their benefits as a result of the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) of the Social Security Act. "

"To that end, I proudly became a cosponsor of H.R. 711. This bill will fully repeal the WEP and allow for Maine seniors to finally receive the benefits they have worked hard for and earned. I firmly believe that each worker should receive the benefits for which they have worked and paid social security taxes."

**H.R. 711, Equal Treatment of Public Servants Act of 2015** was introduced by Congressmen Kevin Brady (R-TX-8) and Richard Neal (D-MA-1). This is a bi-partisan effort and currently has 17 Democrats and 17 Republicans as co-sponsors. This legislation is considered to be more limited in scope than previously introduced bills and emphasizes repeal of Social Security's WEP law and the creation of a new national Social Security formula to jointly calculate one's lifetime public and private sector work history. H.R. 711 has been assigned to the House Committee on Ways and Means. As Senior Members of this Committee, Congressmen Brady and Neal are uniquely situated, according to the Massachusetts' Retired State, County, and Municipal Employees Association, to advance H.R. 711 beyond the Sub Committee on Social Security.

A second bill in the House, **H.R. 973, Social Security Fairness Act of 2015**, has gained the early support of Maine's 1<sup>st</sup> District Congresswoman, Chellie Pingree. H.R. 973 is considered to be a mirror image of previous legislation attempting to repeal the WEP law and the Off Set penalties in the Social Security Act. It is likely that those Members of Congress supporting H.R. 973 and H.R. 711 will work out their differences as both bills have been assigned to the Committee on Ways and Means. Currently H.R. 973 has shown greater support with 112 co-sponsors and representation from 31 states.

One of the most exciting developments in MAR's effort to pass meaningful reform legislation is the introduction of **S. 1651, The Social Security Fairness Act of 2015** in the United States Senate. Sponsored by Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and co-sponsored to date by 15 other Senators, including Maine's Susan Collins, S. 1651 has been referred to the Senate Finance Committee and its Subcommittee on Social Security, Pensions, and Family Policy. Co-sponsors on the Senate Finance Committee include Senator Sherrod Brown, Senator Robert Menendez and Senator Dean Heller.

We need MAR members, current public service workers such as teachers, state employees, municipal and county employees and other retirees that are affected by the WEP and the Social Security's Offset Provision to make and continue to make contact with your Members of Congress. We need to push for the House Committee on Ways and Means and the Senate Finance Committee to hold hearings on the bills assigned to them. Previous legislation has died in Committees because House and Senate Leadership did not call for actual hearings and for votes to send a bill to the House and Senate. This inaction by Congress affects the quality of life for so many retirees. Hearing from constituents does make a difference with our Members of Congress.

MAR will continue to make contacts with our Members of Congress and to follow closely the progress of these bills. Further information will be included in future MAR newsletters and on the MAR website, [www.maineretirees.org](http://www.maineretirees.org). Our combined activity can make a difference.