

News

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TRS Trustees Address Social Security Issues on Capitol Hill, *Express thanks for support from Illinois Sens. Obama and Durbin*

Washington, DC-The Teachers' Retirement System of the State of Illinois (TRS) continues to advocate for the reduction or elimination of federal rules that reduce the Social Security benefits of some of its members.

TRS elected Trustees Jan Cleveland of Carmi and Cynthia O'Neill of Carlyle met in Washington, DC on October 14 with congressional aides to U.S. Senators Barack Obama and Richard Durbin to thank them for their support of reforms to two federal provisions that TRS regards as patently unfair.

The Government Pension Offset or GPO impacts surviving spouses who are collecting pensions from government retirement plans that don't participate in Social Security, such as the Teachers' Retirement System. These members may anticipate receiving a Social Security benefit based on their spouse's record. However, the GPO offset may reduce their Social Security survivor benefit by two-thirds of their TRS pension, which in many cases wipes out any federal spousal benefit.

Equally egregious is the federal Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP), which reduces the Social Security benefits earned by our members on their own record through work performed outside of the Teachers' Retirement System. There are exceptions, such as TRS members who earned 30 years of "substantial earnings" through Social Security. However, the Social Security benefits of most members are reduced under WEP.

During their visit on Capitol Hill, TRS Trustees Cleveland and O'Neill met with Senator Obama aide Crystal Martinez, as well as with Carmen White, a congressional staffer to Senator Durbin. Both Illinois Senators serve as co-sponsors of legislation (SB 206) that would reform the GPO and WEP provisions. However, the repeal of these provisions is expected to cost \$100 billion and will more likely to be addressed as part of a major overhaul of Social Security. For more information about the bill: <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d110:s.00206>.

TRS provides retirement, disability, and survivor benefits to 355,584 members employed by public schools located outside the city of Chicago.

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