



December 27, 2012

Dear Representative/Senator:

As Congress completes its legislative agenda for the 112th Congress, the undersigned organizations urge you to include H.R. 5981 in any end-of-year legislation. H.R. 5981, a bipartisan bill sponsored by Representative Thomas Petri (R-WI) and Representative Rob Andrews (D-NJ), will correct an oversight in our private pension law that unfairly denies pension benefits to a small group of widows and widowers.

In 1984 Congress enacted legislation providing for ongoing pension plans to pay survivors benefits to widows and widowers regardless of whether their spouses died before or after they retired. In 1986, the law was clarified to ensure that these benefits would also be paid after single employer pension plans terminated. However, the law was not changed for multiemployer plans.

As a result, Carol C, the disabled widow of a meat cutter, was denied a pension simply because her husband died while he was still working in a job covered by his multiemployer plan when the plan terminated. Had her husband died before the plan terminated or after he retired, she would be getting survivors benefits.

H.R. 5981 would close this gap in the law.

The number of widows who would be helped by this legislation is small but the pension benefits they would receive would provide them with much-needed income in retirement.

On Carol's behalf, and for the other widows and widowers who find themselves in the same circumstances, the undersigned organizations urge you to correct this unfair oversight in our pension laws and pass H.R. 5981 this year.

Pension Rights Center
National Women's Law Center
National Coordinating Committee for Multiemployer Plans