



Issue 4 – 2016

THE RETIREE GUARDIAN

Newsletter of CenturyLink retirees who are members of
the NWB – US WEST – Qwest Retiree Association

www.AUSWR.org

From the Chair Gerold “Jerry” Weldon

Welcome to the latest issue of your *Retiree Guardian*. I hope this issue finds you well and enjoying the last days of summer. Inside you will find many interesting articles pertaining to matters we all care about in our retirement. The staff, board members and other members of our association have worked hard to create yet another great issue. Please take the time to read and enjoy the articles.

We have had a great year so far in tracking down problems and issues that seem to come up daily. Many of you have contacted either me or an employee advocate to get various problems addressed. I am glad to say that in almost all cases, our advocates have been able to find solutions and expedite resolutions. Please continue to let our team assist whenever you encounter problems with your retirement benefits.

The board is again requesting ERISA documents from CenturyLink in accordance with the law. We provide these documents to Curtis Kennedy, our attorney, for normal review and comment. This not only keeps us informed of the company status but also reminds them that we pay close attention to the administration

of our benefits and that we should not be taken for granted. Fortunately we enjoy a healthy and positive relationship with the company.

In my last message, I mentioned that we are willing and able to send representatives to local meetings of “coffee groups” to answer questions and review issues. I am happy to report that some of you have already responded with invitations and we will be scheduling those visits. If you would like a board member or two to attend one of your local informal gatherings, just drop me a note and we will try to accommodate your team.

Please enjoy this issue of the *Guardian* and share it with a fellow retiree who may not be a member. Invite him or her to join our group. There will always be subjects that require our vigilance and attention as we enjoy retirement. The association will continue to serve your interests in those matters.

Jerry Weldon
Chair

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Our Mission: To preserve and protect the pension and benefits we earned

2017 Benefits News

CenturyLink Annual Enrollment

Important Dates for Health Care Changes
CenturyLink Annual Enrollment: November 8-17, 2016
Medicare Open Enrollment: October 15-December 7, 2016
Changes effective January 1, 2017

**Special for *The Retiree Guardian* from
Deb Conley, CenturyLink Compensation &
Benefits staff to Barbara Wilcox**

It's Annual Enrollment Time Again!

For those who are currently enrolled or who are eligible for any of the CenturyLink group benefits, the Annual Enrollment dates will be November 8 through November 17 this year. Annual Enrollment information will be arriving the first week of November to your mailing address on file with the Service Center.

Good News: The health-plan options available to non-Medicare-eligible retirees stay the same in 2017, as do the Health Reimbursement Account (HRA) subsidy amounts for Medicare-eligible retirees.

The Annual Enrollment materials will provide the 2017 group plan premium rates, plan comparisons and additional information — and are considered the official Summary of Material Modifications (SMM) for Annual Enrollment changes.

As in the past, if you are still eligible and do not want to change your group plan enrollment election, no action is necessary. You will automatically remain in the same benefit option as you had last year.

For Post-1990, non-Medicare-eligible retirees, the only benefits change is due to federal legislation. Those enrolled in the High Deductible Health Plan (HDHP), the Health Savings Account (HSA) maximum contribution limit for Retiree-Only coverage increased by \$50, from \$3,350 to \$3,400.

Things to remember for those on a CenturyLink company group plan:

- Maintenance (recurring) prescription drugs are still mandatory mail order after two fills at the pharmacy.
- Use Premium providers and facilities and Centers of Excellence whenever possible for the highest level of benefits—more savings for you.

Medicare-eligible retirees with HRA funding: The HRA subsidy amount will remain the same for 2017. You will receive an Annual Enrollment statement from CenturyLink, showing your HRA subsidy amount and any dental and/or life insurance available, if applicable.

If you are enrolled in the HRA option, and therefore in an individual Medicare policy outside of CenturyLink, your insurance carrier will notify you of any benefit or premium changes.

The Medicare Open Enrollment period for individual Medicare plans, including Medicare Advantage, Medicare Supplemental and Medicare Prescription Drug plans, is October 15 through December 7, 2016.

Things to remember:

- Your individual insurance carrier will provide you with information about any plan changes or premium changes.
- Be sure to evaluate your Prescription Drug coverage plan each year, as insurance carriers typically change tier levels and pricing of drugs each year. Or, your prescriptions may have

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changed.

- Group dental coverage continues to be offered as a benefit option.

Pre-1991 and ERO 1992 retiree plans:

There are no changes to the benefit plan options offered for 2017—the Company Guaranteed Option for all retirees, the United HealthCare (UHC) group Medicare Advantage and the Health Reimbursement Account (HRA) benefit options for those who are Medicare eligible.

You can elect to “waive” coverage as well; however, you would not be eligible to re-enroll unless you experience a Qualified Life Event, or during the next Annual Enrollment period.

- ☞ If you are changing to the Medicare Advantage benefit option, you (and any Medicare-eligible dependents) are required to complete an enrollment form within the CenturyLink Annual Enrollment period.

- ☞ If you are changing **from** the Medicare Advantage benefit option, you are required to complete a dis-enrollment form within the Annual Enrollment period.

- ☞ **Please Note:** These forms are required by Medicare before your desired election can be effective.

Coming Soon:

A CenturyLink retiree newsletter will be posted on www.centurylinkbenefits.com. Be sure to visit this website to get the latest retiree news. The first edition focuses on Annual Enrollment and is expected to be available on October 1 and updated quarterly.

Reminder:

Remember to update your address, phone number and beneficiary information — if they have changed — at the CenturyLink Service Center at **800-729-7526** Mondays through Fridays from 7:30 A.M. to 5:30 P.M. Mountain Standard Time.

CenturyLink to lay off another 3,000+ employees

CenturyLink says it is cutting as many as 3,400 jobs to lower its costs. The company cites its loss of landline business as the prime motive to reduce its workforce of 43,000 employees.

In August 2015, the company announced 1,000 layoffs and now follows in September 2016, with another seven-to-eight percent force reduction. The

company announcement said it is seeking to first trim its headcount on a voluntary basis. Employees who take voluntary severance packages can participate in outplacement assistance programs.

Company spokesman Mark Molzen, Issues Manager of Corporate Communications, said most of the layoffs are expected to be done by December 16.



CenturyLink five-year stock performance since merger with Qwest

Source: Yahoo Finance, MSN Money



Federal Appeals Court Rules: Verizon retirees “can’t complain about improper pension plan management”

*by Curtis L Kennedy, Litigation Attorney
to AUSWR Colo/Wyo and NWB*

After being instructed—by a very divided United States Supreme Court to reconsider its decision to dismiss the Verizon retirees’ legal claims (stemming from the corporation’s decision to ‘de-risk,’ and remove 41,000 management retirees from their pension plan)—the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that, nevertheless, it found no legal error in its prior decision.

Since none of the Verizon retirees had yet personally suffered any financial harm, the federal appeals court ruled that it was proper to dismiss all of the claims submitted by both those retirees transferred to Prudential annuities and those retirees remaining in the Verizon pension plan.

In short, the Appellate Court stuck to its prior mantra, that a complaining retiree must first be able to prove personal financial harm, before complaining about wrongful pension plan doings.

This decision strikes at the very heart of Congress’s and President Ford’s clearly expressed intent in 1974 when enacting ERISA, the federal law that replaced all state laws, and established a uniform law to guard against pension plan mismanagement.

The Appellate Court’s decision fails to appreciate the importance of centuries-long trust law.

Last year, the *Lee/Pundt v. Verizon* case was one of 9,500 cases submitted for consideration by the US Supreme Court. Alas, the Court granted certiorari review [agreement to hear] less than 90 cases. Fortunately, the *Lee/Pundt* case was one of the few cases granted a review.

Without either elaboration or further comment, the
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US Supreme Court sent the *Lee/Pundt* case back to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals to decide whether the retirees had a right to sue in a federal court, in light of a recent decision made by the US Supreme Court in a totally unrelated case, *Spokeo v. Robbins*.

The *Spokeo* case involved the rights of consumers to sue in federal court regarding incorrect credit report disclosures. The *Spokeo* case did not involve the rights of retirees to sue in federal court regarding improper management of pension trust funds.

On September 15, the federal Appellate Court ruled that it could find nothing in its analysis of the US Supreme Court’s decision in *Spokeo* to warrant a different outcome for the *Lee/Pundt* case. The Fifth Circuit Court held that its prior ruling “remains as valid in light of *Spokeo* as it was before *Spokeo* was decided.”

Most unfortunately, the approximately five-page decision by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals is one of a growing number of federal court decisions made during the last 10 years specifically limiting the ability of retiree pension plan participants to

complain in a federal court about mismanagement of pension monies.

The growing trend is to rule that no retiree can complain in a federal lawsuit until such time as his or her individual pension benefit payment becomes either reduced or at-risk, i.e., benefits become jeopardized.

The federal courts are ruling that, until such time as a retiree has been financially harmed, he or she doesn’t have ‘standing to sue’ and, therefore, cannot pursue a claim in the federal courts.

Essentially this legal outcome means that corporate

What can you do?
The present disposition of the *Lee/Pundt* case is a pressing reason retirees need to vote for candidates who will appropriately take action to protect pensions. Support the Presidential and Senatorial candidates most willing and able to send to the US Supreme Court qualified jurists who will enforce the true principles of the federal law ERISA and further protections for retirees.

Your vote counts!
Do not place too much faith in the presently very divided and incomplete US Supreme Court.

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pension plan sponsors can use your pension monies to achieve corporate goals or other nefarious activity, and you can't complain unless your individual benefit suffers financial harm. While the reasoning applied by the federal appeals court in the *Lee/Pundt* case has led to recent victories by pension plan sponsors, such as Verizon, and pension plan service providers, such as Bank of America, the United States Department of Labor is actively fighting this trend. So, too, is the Pension Rights Center which joined as an amicus party in favor of the Verizon retirees' efforts to persuade the US Supreme Court to take up the *Lee/Pundt* case in the first instance.

Now, the only legal avenue left for the Verizon retirees is, once again, to petition the US Supreme Court to vacate the appellate court decision, take up the matter and, this time, directly address the issue of when retirees can seek redress in a federal court to remedy acts of pension plan mismanagement. Therefore, within the 90-day deadline—before December 15, 2016—the Verizon retirees, hopefully with the help of some federal agencies and other amicus parties, will submit the matter to the US Supreme Court.



Condensed Timeline of Lee/Pundt v Verizon

- September 15, 2016 - Fifth Circuit affirms decision against retirees
- June 24, 2016 - Official Judgment by U.S. Supreme Court Granting Petition for Certiorari Review and Remanding the Case Back to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals
- December 15, 2015 - Retirees' Petition to U.S. Supreme Court for a Writ of Certiorari
- August 17, 2015 - Fifth Circuit's Decision Affirming Judgment Against Retirees
- February 4, 2015 - Curtis Kennedy making Oral Argument to the Fifth Circuit Court
- May 5, 2014 - Notice of Appeal
- April 11, 2014 - Final Order Dismissing the Case
- November 28, 2012 - Retirees' Application for Temporary Restraining Order
- October 17, 2012 - Verizon Board Resolutions to Transfer Management Retirees

Membership and Retiree Guardian Updates

By Clyde Just

As you may recall, in Issue 3 I told you that we had 780 members who had not yet paid their dues for this next fiscal year. By the middle of August this number was reduced to 311. By the middle of September it was reduced to 244. What this means is that we now have 2,257 members in our retiree association. We did send out one more postcard to these 244 members on September 15, 2016. It is possible that we may get some additional renewals before October 15 when we will remove the non-renewals from our membership list. The following chart shows you our membership for the past five years (as of July 1 of each year).

Year	Number of Members	Reduction
2012	4235	
2013	3826	409
2014	3099	727
2015	2810	289
2016	2511	299
2017 (as of Sept. '16)	2257	244

Enough said?

Your board hopes that you found Issue 3 interesting. I do have one apology to make for an error on my part. The pictures taken at our annual meeting in Des Moines did not have the names listed below the pictures. I will try to do better at our next annual meeting.

Back on Friday, August 12, Issue 3 was ready to go to the printer. On that date we sent out the RG to 500 members who want to receive their *Retiree Guardian* via email. With the report from our August 4 meeting with CenturyLink's Marina Pearson and Frances Brown being very important to many of you, we also sent out just the article on that meeting to all 1,600 members who have given us their email addresses. While that meant that 500 of you got two emails, the other 1,100 at least got to see the report of the meeting about 10 days before they received the hard copy. For those of you who receive your *Retiree Guardian* via regular mail, the group in Minneapolis that does this job for us mailed them on Wednesday, August 17. I do know some people received their hard copy about a week later.

What to do when a retiree dies

This page (October 2016) replaces all previous versions of “What to do when a retiree dies.”

General Directives: Each retiree should share this information in a conversation with heirs, beneficiaries, dependents, family members, estate planners, investment and legal advisors, such as a certified elder-law attorney.

This is a summary of certain earned benefits to which a surviving spouse or qualified dependent(s) may be entitled, including those benefits due to the designated beneficiary at the time of the retiree’s death.

NOTE: It is important to notify the Service Center of the retiree’s death as soon as possible after the death, but it must be within one year.

How to apply for survivor benefits:

* Call 1-800-729-7526, and select Option 3, then Option 1. You will speak with a representative from AON Hewitt, the benefits management company contracted by CenturyLink to administer the Service Center.

* You must ask the Service Center representative to provide you with information regarding the Group Life Insurance payout, continued health care insurance and the Survivor Annuity Option (if applicable).

* You must provide the following information about the deceased retiree: full name of the retiree, date of death, Social Security Number, and address.

* You must provide several certified copies of the Death Certificate to collect the survivor benefits.

Group Life Insurance: The Group Life Insurance policy is administered by MetLife and is not taxable income. This benefit was originally based on the annual pay of the retiree. Qwest reduced the value of the group policy to a flat \$10,000 for all retirees. You will be asked by the Service Center representative to provide the last four digits of the retiree’s Social Security number, date of birth and a password as recorded with the Service Center. (If a password has not been established, a temporary password will be set up, so a permanent one can be established).

NOTE: It is important to have current beneficiary information recorded at the Service Center: Consider calling now and verifying that you have your current beneficiary on file. Call 1-800-729-7526, select Option 2; then Option 1.

Survivor’s Annuity: Retirees who selected the Survivor’s Option at the time of retirement should make certain the spouse is aware of this benefit. The surviving spouse may arrange for direct-deposit or provide a mailing address to receive the annuity payment.

If the retiree outlives the spouse, the deduction from the retiree’s monthly payment to pay for the survivor

annuity should be cancelled by calling the Service Center. The amount of the cancelled deduction would then be added to the retiree’s regular monthly pension payment.

Health Care Coverage (COBRA)

Medical (COBRA): The medical coverage for the surviving spouse and any eligible dependent(s) will be the same as that provided under the retiree’s coverage at the time of death, and will be administered through COBRA for the first 36 months. The benefits are as follows: 1) Subsidized medical coverage for the first six months after the death of the retiree; 2) 30 months’ medical coverage at the COBRA premium, plus a 2% administrative cost (total 102% cost); 3) lifetime medical coverage at the full COBRA premium (not including the 2% administrative cost) for the surviving spouse and any eligible dependent(s) who were covered at the time of the retiree’s death, provided premiums are paid timely, otherwise coverage is dropped and cannot be reinstated. Eligible dependents not enrolled at the time of the retiree’s death can be enrolled during the 36-month period; however, their medical coverage will end at the conclusion of the 36-month period. **NOTE:** The 2012 CWA union contract made changes to the medical benefits for surviving spouses of occupational retirees who retired after January 1, 2014. Consult your union local for details.

Dental (COBRA): The dental coverage is offered for 36 months at the COBRA premium, plus a 2% administrative cost (total 102% cost) for the surviving spouse and any eligible dependent(s) who were covered at the time of the retiree’s death. Eligible dependents who were not enrolled at the time of the retiree’s death can be enrolled during the 36-month period, however, the dental coverage ends for the surviving spouse and any eligible dependents at the conclusion of the 36-month COBRA period.

Telephone Concession Service (also known as “discounted service”): If the retiree received concession telephone service provided by CenturyLink, it will terminate after two monthly billing periods from the date of the retiree’s death.

Other Important Contacts

Social Security: Notify Social Security of the retiree’s death by calling 1-800-772-1213, or at the website: www.SSA.gov. Hearing Impaired number is 800-325-0778. Social Security notification of the retiree’s death will end Medicare benefits.

Veterans Administration: If the deceased retiree was a veteran, the Veterans Administration should be contacted to advise of the retiree’s death and to determine if there are any eligible survivor benefits by calling 1-800-827-1000 or at the website: www.VA.gov.



National Retiree Legislative Network (NRLN) Report

Cynthia Hadsell
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In this issue we're including important messages from NRLN President Bill Kadereit and VP Bob Martina. At this writing, they are in Washington, D.C., for the NRLN fall conference. We did not send a representative from NWB, but intend to attend the 2017 spring conference after the election furor has settled down.

From Bill:

"We work to chip away at the attitude of members of congress and urge your support ... we should be striving to make retirement better for us and generations to come. It is long past due that congress treats retirees with the same respect they give to campaign large donors. If we don't work at it, who will? Nobody! We are making a difference and have a strong contingent of Association and Chapter representatives coming to Washington DC this fall to face off with Congress. In 2016, we welcomed in the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) retirees, Avaya retirees and DuPont retirees. We just announced a new NRLN Villages Chapter in Florida, where over 110,000 retirees live in 60,000 homes. We now have members in all 50 states and 78% of the

congressional districts, with room to grow. We do a much more credible job in telling the retiree story and in lobbying hard for income and health care security than any other advocacy organization."

From Bob:

"The NRLN doesn't make political contributions, take congress members on junkets, or pay them to make speeches. We count on you and others to put pressure on congress by responding to Action Alerts, occasionally calling the local office, once in a great while submitting a letter to the editor, or using social media such as Facebook or Twitter. Responding to Action Alerts is #1 and is the minimum we ask of you. For a guide on how to do it, go to <http://www.nrln.org/documents/NRLN%20Choose%20Your%20Method%20to%20Influence%20Congress.pdf>. Please take action when you get an alert from the NRLN and please respond to all NRLN Action Alerts - the latest at <http://www.nrln.org/index.html> under 'Take Action.' This will take less than five minutes and has more impact in congress than you can imagine as most citizens do not make the effort."

Treasurer's Report

Paul Williams, Treasurer

As membership renewal season comes to an end I think we did very well. Unfortunately, as we age we do naturally lose a few members each year. The last time I checked there were still 244 existing members who had not renewed. If you happen to be one of the 244, please renew today. If you know any retirees who are not members, talk to them about the need to join, to get information, to keep an eye on what is happening at CenturyLink, and hopefully to have a voice in anything that affects our benefits. With the end of membership renewal season, my reports to the board change from black ink to red ink. The good news is that we have collected enough in dues to proceed to the 2017 renewal season with no decrease in services, and perhaps more communication with members and perhaps some local meetings for those of you who have not been able to make it to one of the annual membership meetings.

You have probably seen the news reports or heard from your friends that CenturyLink is downsizing significantly. Many of those affected will not have pensions and very

little in the way of benefits. Some will be grandfathered into the old plans. This downsizing brings two things to mind. First, it does demonstrate the need to stay active in our organization and keep an eye on the company's actions. Most of us remember the severance packages and other payments that had a drastic effect on our pension fund during the Qwest downsizing. The company has the legal right to use the funds in many ways, but there are also restrictions on exactly what they can do. CenturyLink has played by the rules so far, but I still believe in the need for increased vigilance anytime they are making decisions that may affect our pension funds or other benefits.

The second thing that comes to mind is a large source of new members. So after you congratulate your friend who just received an incentive to make the retirement decision they were about to make anyway, hand them this copy of *The Retiree Guardian* and suggest they fill out the form on the back page.



Getting ready for Medicare Open Enrollment

Barbara Wilcox, Health Care Specialist AUSWR Colorado/Wyoming

The longer I work as a SHIP counselor, and the longer I help CenturyLink retirees with their Medicare issues, the more I learn about Medicare. Here are a few things I've learned about Medicare benefits in circumstances that we normally don't expect Medicare to cover.

Dental

We all know that Medicare doesn't cover normal dental care, such as having our teeth cleaned, X-rays, fillings, dentures, etc. But, Medicare Part A (hospital insurance) may cover certain dental services if you are admitted to the hospital. Part A may also cover emergency or certain complicated dental services.

Part B (medical insurance) may cover the costs of oral surgery done on an outpatient basis, or may pay for the services of an oral surgeon while you are hospitalized. If you think that your dental needs are out of the ordinary and might qualify for Medicare coverage, it pays to ask by calling Medicare at 1-800-633-4227. You can locate an oral surgeon who takes Medicare by doing a search on www.Medicare.gov.

Hearing

Medicare does not cover the cost of hearing aids, or hearing tests for the fitting of hearing aids. But, Medicare can cover the cost of a hearing test, if your Primary Care provider orders the hearing test to see if you may need medical treatment. Discuss your hearing problems with your Primary Care provider.

Vision

Medicare does not cover routine eye tests for the fitting of glasses or contact lenses, and it doesn't pay for the usual glasses or contact lenses that most of us need. However, Medicare may cover regular eye exams by a doctor if you are diabetic or at risk for certain conditions such as glaucoma or macular degeneration.

If you need eye surgery, such as cataract surgery, Medicare covers the eye surgery in the same way it covers other surgeries. Also, Medicare covers one pair of eyeglasses or contact lenses following cataract

surgery. You need to get those eyeglasses or contacts from an optician who takes Medicare.

Do a search for a provider of "prosthetic lenses" on www.Medicare.gov—and make a phone call to the optician before you go, just to make sure they will take the amount Medicare pays. Medicare limits the amount it will pay for eyeglass frames, and will not pay for added coatings on the eyeglass lenses. So, you still may pay out-of-pocket for extras, like lens coatings or fashion frames.

Your state SHIP office is available to answer your Medicare questions.

State SHIP Offices	
Arizona	800-432-4040
Colorado	888-696-7213
Idaho	800-247-4422
Iowa	800-351-4664
Minnesota	800-333-2433
Montana	800-551-3191
Nebraska	800-234-7119
New Mexico	800-432-2080
North Dakota	888-575-6611
Oregon	800-722-4134
South Dakota	800-536-8197
Utah	800-541-7735
Washington	800-562-6900
Wyoming	800-856-4398

It is better to grow old with a sense of humor than to grow old with no sense at all.

About the Pension Rights Center. Since its founding in 1976, the Pension Rights Center's activities have been directed at trying to make sure that older Americans will have enough money to live on when they are too old to work. www.pensionrights.org

Legislation introduced by Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Steve Daines (R-MT) is aimed at solving a problem that affects so many retirement plan participants and retirees today – the problem of lost retirement benefits.

The Retirement Savings Lost and Found Act of 2016 (S. 3078) would create an Office of Retirement Savings Lost and Found that would serve as a central location of retirement plan information, and would connect individuals with the retirement benefits they have earned.

The office would be a vast improvement over the current hodgepodge situation in which people who have earned retirement benefits must search a multitude of sources in order to retrieve their benefits. Sometimes the benefits are never found.

The bill would create an online search tool that would enable pension and 401(k) plan participants to search for their plans and find contact information for the current plan administrator. Importantly, the plan information in the online directory would be updated regularly based on the latest information provided by employers to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

Participants with small accounts have a particularly hard time finding their benefits after they have stopped working for an employer, and some may have forgotten about the benefits they earned. Under current law, plan administrators are permitted to make “forced transfers” to Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs) for participants with account balances of \$5,000 or less in two circumstances:

- once a participant has left employment and cannot be found, or
- when a participant does not make an election indicating where to send the money in the account. These forced transfers must be specifically permitted under the rules of the participant's plan. Accounts of \$1,000 or less may be paid out in cash if not transferred to an IRA.

In a 2014 report, “401(k) Plans: Greater Protections needed for Forced Transfers and Inactive Accounts,” the U.S. Government Accountability Office recently reported that nine large IRA providers had opened 1.8 million forced-transfer accounts as of 2013 with retirement savings

totaling \$3.4 billion dollars.

The Retirement Savings Lost and Found Act of 2016 would direct all employer-provided information on small-account forced transfers to one location, the Office of Retirement Savings Lost and Found, to enable participants to locate their benefits.

The bill:

- Would establish an Office of Retirement Savings Lost and Found that would collect the information needed for participants to locate their benefits.
- Would create an online searchable database of plans and current contact information for plan administrators, which would be regularly updated based on information provided by employers to the IRS as part of current reporting requirements.
- Would increase account balance limits for small-account forced transfers from \$5,000 or less to \$6,000 or less.
- Would require employers to report specific information about forced transfers: the name of the participant whose account was transferred, the amount of the account, and, for IRAs, the name and address of the IRA issuer that received the account. If an annuity is purchased for a participant, employers would report the issuer of the annuity and the contract number. Employers would send this information to the IRS as part of current reporting requirements. The information given to the IRS would be transferred to the Office of Retirement Savings Lost and Found.
- Would require plan administrators making a forced transfer of an account of \$1,000 or less to send the money to the Director of the Retirement Savings Lost and Found or to the Secretary of the Treasury for investment in United States securities when a participant cannot be found, or when a distribution is sent but not claimed by the participant. Such transfers could not be made for six months.

Under the provisions of the bill, the Secretary of Labor will provide guidance on investment options for mandatory (forced) transfers of small accounts of \$6,000 or less to individual retirement plans in which a participant cannot be found or a participant does not make an election for a distribution. These mandatory transfers can be invested in target date or lifecycle funds, or other investment option determined by the Secretary of Labor.

What's up with recent Social Security changes?

Excerpt from Mark Miller, Reuters Chicago and snopes.com/factcheck

Recent news accounts about Social Security make claims that May 2016 changes to Social Security will “fundamentally affect core benefits and threaten the financial security of millions of Americans.”

Is this claim true? No ... what's really happening is that the May 2016 changes to Social Security will eliminate a few strategies that allow some recipients to maximize their benefits.

In October 2015, Congress passed HR 1314, also known as the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015. That legislative bill called for some modifications to the Social Security program which took effect May 2016.

As usual some unscrupulous finance-related businesses seized upon those modifications to scare gullible readers into signing up for hefty financial newsletter subscriptions in order to protect themselves from Congress' supposed “hidden radical reform that threatens the financial security of as many as 21.3 million Americans.”

In fact, the pending changes are relatively minor: they do not take away any existing benefits or alter core Social Security benefits or payment levels, they are not “hidden” or “radical,” and they do not “threaten the financial security” of millions of Americans.

The changes do alter or eliminate a few strategies used by some people to maximize their Social Security benefits.

The first change that ended May 1, 2016, applies to Social Security's “file and suspend” strategy, which allowed couples to maximize their combined benefits by having one spouse file for Social Security upon reaching full retirement age (currently 66), then immediately suspending the benefits. This allowed the other spouse to claim a spousal benefit while their deferred Social Security grew eight percent per year until age 70.

Another change eliminated “restricted applications,” a mechanism that allowed persons who are between full retirement age and age 70 to file an application to claim spousal benefits but defer collecting their own benefits; upon reaching 70, they could change from receiving

spousal benefits to receiving their own (larger) benefits. In the future, when a spouse files anytime after age 62, he or she will fall under the “deemed filing” rule, which already applies to people who are not at their full retirement age. If you're under your full retirement age [and file], Social Security says you are deemed to have taken your own benefit

With the elimination of restricted applications and the introduction of deemed filing for all ages, a spouse can only receive the larger of either their spousal benefit or their own benefit. They can't change their choice either, which means no deferring benefits until age 70, and then switching options for a larger monthly check.

However, those who will turn 62 by the end of 2016 will be grandfathered in under the old rules for restricted applications.

The last of the pending changes affects suspended benefits, a mechanism that allows persons to file for Social Security but suspend their benefits, then at a later date request payments dating retroactive to their original filing date:

For example, if a man filed for Social Security at age 66 and then suspended his payments, his benefits would grow at a rate of eight percent per year. However, if the man came down with a life-threatening illness at age 68, he could retroactively unsuspend his benefits. He would lose the 16 percent bump in pay he should have received from deferring payments, but Social Security will send a lump sum payment for the past two years. Future monthly payments would be made at the same rate the man would have received had he started benefits at age 66.

Under the new rules, Social Security beneficiaries can no longer retroactively unsuspend benefits. In the example above, if the man needed to start receiving benefits at age 68, he could still unsuspend his filing. He would not receive a lump sum payout for the previous two years, but he would begin to receive his monthly payments at a higher rate, thanks to the deferral.

Reasons for the May 2016 changes in Social Security are to protect the Social Security Trust Fund, and to extend the lifetime of full benefits for eligible recipients.



Thank you for providing names and obits of friends and associates who have passed.

Please continue to provide obit information to me at:
 dkelly717@aol.com or call me at 763-560-2840.

Don Kelly, Coordinator of milestones

Iowa

Alexander, Margie	Winterset
Auge, Delores A	Fort Madison
Bechtel, Larry L	Urbandale
Biles, Fern L	Des Moines/Johnston
Deeds, Donald Louis	Atkins
Donahue, Catherine	Clinton
EGgen, Gilbert "Gib" Richard	Vancouver WA/ West Des Moines
Gibson, Jean E	Altoona
Gilbert, Marlyn "Guy"	Earlham
Gilligan, Robert W "Bob"	Denver CO/Des Moines
Hlubek, Sandra Jo	Pensacola FL/ Camanche
Husman, Lillian L	Onawa
Iseminger, Kathryn (Eisenlauer)	Des Moines
Kluever, Gene C	Atlantic
Mahrenholz, Doris	Kennesaw GA/ Des Moines
McGrath, Rita	Johnston
Nelson, Gustaf H "Gus"	Council Bluffs
Shippey, LaVonne	Mesa AZ/Des Moines
Swinton, Glenn	Marble Rock
Ward, Ralph	Huntsville AL/ Des Moines

Minnesota

Anderson, LaVaine "Mervie"	Burnsville
Andrews, Carolyn Sue "Suzie"	Shoreview
Cecere, Gloria Faith	Bloomington
Couture, Gerald Roger	Cloquet
Drusch, Donald A	Bermidji
Fegraues, Harald H	Duluth
Fykson, Virginia (Peterson)	Duluth
Hansen, Harry	Pipestone/ Minneapolis
Heglund, Vernon	Minneapolis
Helm, Helen Vivian Tweton	Thief River Falls
Hohman, Mark W	Ada
Holmberg, Herbert Richard	Grand Rapids
Hornseth, Harris R	Spring Lake Park
Johnson, Leroy Allen "Lee"	Ham Lake
Johnson, William	Red Wing
Klein, Donald J	Morris/Baxter
Kuffel, Ronald Lloyd	Sauk Centre
Lapine, Robert John	Duluth
Larson, Timothy James	Zumbrota
McAlister, Lucille "Celie"	Sauk Rapids

Minnesota (continued)

McCarthy, William	Watertown
Mercer, Helen Marie	Chatfield
Opheim, Robert	Hopkins
Patrick, Glenn Terry "PT"	Maplewood
Peterson, Marian J	Minneapolis
Sargent, John Patrick "Pat"	Park Rapids
Schuh, Dennis Philip	Fridley
Smith, William S Jr.	West St. Paul
Sundmark, Daniel Scott	West Eveleth
Talaska, Warren Gilbert	Aitkin/ Minneapolis
Wallen, Milton Herbert	Cloquet
Way, Chester Arthur	Port Charlotte FL/ Prior Lake
Weber, Gerald C	Inver Grove Heights

Nebraska

Bauer, Rosemary E	Bloomington IL/Omaha
Blocher, Albert Jr	Lexington
Bowman, Sevilla	Omaha
Bunderson, Durwood Kent	Fremont
Cipperra, Geraldine A "Jerrie"	Omaha
Claude, George	Omaha
Dokken, Miriam	Grand Island
Kahm, Cynthia	Omaha
Kearney, Marjorie Ann	Lexington
Kissel, Norma	Baton Rouge LA/Omaha
Moorcraft, Christine Louise Perrin	Fort Collins CO/Omaha
Nielsen, Robert "Bob"	Omaha
Stemm, Richard D "Dick"	Omaha

North Dakota

Connell, Guy	Dickinson
McLean, Sharon L	Fargo
Risser, Betty Ann	Bismarck
Soberg, Harry W	Fargo

South Dakota

Coplan, Betty Lou	Canton
DeVries, Thomas Edward	Sioux Falls
Harris, Loretta L	Sioux Falls
Mairose, Margaret Mary	Sioux Falls
Puetz, Lzora	Salem/Sioux Falls
Widness, Marvin John Jr	Sioux Falls

Other

Ames, Pauline C	Ocala FL
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NWB-U S WEST-Qwest Retiree Association, Inc.
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IA, NE

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New Member _____ *Renewal* _____ *Change* _____ *Extra* _____ *Date* _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State __ Zip Code _____ - _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____ *(please enter if you have one)*

Retired from (*Company*) _____ State __ Year _____

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Pledge to be an active NRLN Grassroots Network volunteer and correspond with my Senators and Representative on issues important to retirees. YES ___ or NO ___

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