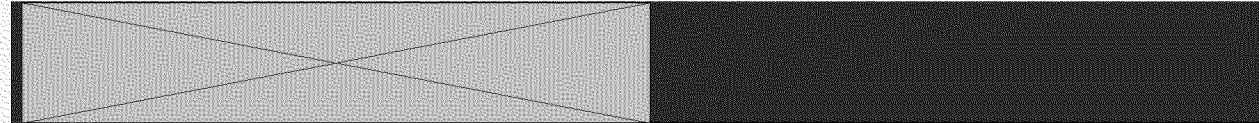


To: Jackson, Ryan[jackson.ryan@epa.gov]
From: The Washington Post
Sent: Wed 7/12/2017 4:00:31 PM
Subject: [SPAM] Federal Insider: GOP House members hit Trump plan to break retirement promise to feds on moral, ethical grounds



GOP House members hit Trump plan to break retirement promise to feds on moral, ethical grounds

By Joe Davidson

Rep. Rob Bishop (R-Utah) speaking last year. He opposes President Trump's plan to cut retirement benefits for current federal employees. (J. Scott Applewhite/AP)

You can't always tell a book by its cover or a politician's position by the party.

Rep. Rob Bishop is a Utah Republican known as a solid right-winger. Like many Republicans, he generally doesn't get good grades on federal workforce issues.

His most recent ratings on congressional voting scorecards were 20 percent from the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE), 15 percent from the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) and 10 percent from the National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU).

But wait — while he has voted against positions favored by employee groups on many issues, he recently led a letter from nine Republicans opposing federal retirement cuts proposed by President Trump.

It's a principled position.

Citing the various ways Trump's budget plan would hit feds, despite his call for a 1.9 percent pay raise, the letter says "our strongest objection is how the proposals break a promise to employees and retirees who have based career planning on longstanding promised benefit calculations. They and their families don't deserve to be treated in this cavalier manner."

In addition to Bishop, it was signed by Reps. Tom Cole (Okla.), Austin Scott

(Ga.), Barbara Comstock (Va.), Rob Wittman (Va.), Christopher H. Smith (N.J.), Frank A. LoBiondo (N.J.), Walter B. Jones (N.C.) and Brian K. Fitzpatrick (Pa.).

They oppose Trump's plan to:

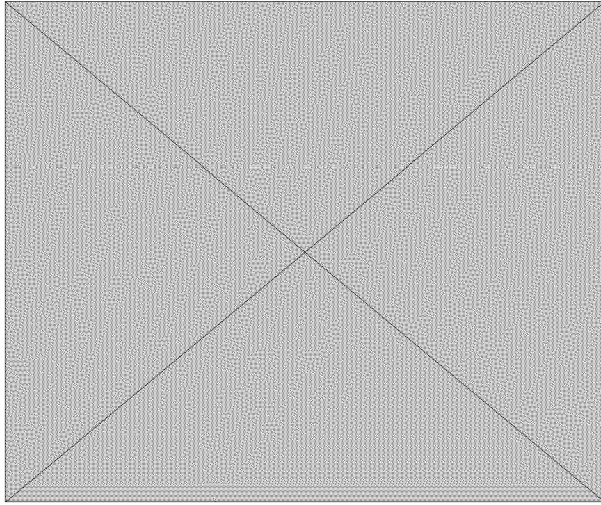
- Lower retirement benefits by basing them on the average of the high five years of salary instead of the current high three.
- Abolish cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) for current and future Federal Employee Retirement System employees.
- Reduce the COLA for Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) employees by 0.5 percent from what the formula otherwise allowed.
- End supplemental retirement income for FERS employees who retire beginning in 2018.
- Increase individual out-of-pocket FERS payments by 1 percentage point each year until they equal the government's contribution. This would take up to six years and would amount to increased payments of about 6 percent. Payments from federal law enforcement officers would increase by the same amount but would not equal the greater contributions from law enforcement agencies.

The last point would be "tantamount" to a "permanent 6% pay cut," the letter said.

"I think we have a moral obligation to those currently in the system," Bishop explained during an interview. "That's the basis on which they were hired; that's how they are planning for their future."

The letter to House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) and House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) points out that these cuts have been pushed before without success: "Recycling discredited proposals targeting federal workers is disruptive to them, and demoralizing to all middle-class civilian worker families." The House leaders have not responded to the letter, and the Trump administration had no comment.

Bishop is not necessarily opposed to imposing less-generous retirement benefits on new staffers. "I can live with that," he said by phone. "I cannot go back retroactively and change those benefits. That's a philological position. ... Philosophically, I just think it is wrong."



It is an oppositionist that wants to devalue federal Republican administrations. When Barack Obama was president, he proposed increasing retirement contributions made by current employees.

“I was opposed to it then, and I’m still opposed to it,” said Bishop, whose district includes 16,000 civilian employees at Hill Air Force Base, an Internal Revenue Service center and other federal offices. “The idea of making retroactive cuts ... it’s not a conservative or liberal approach ... and I’ve still think it’s wrong, regardless of who proposes it.”

That’s a position that brings his current effort praise from employee organization leaders who generally rate him low.

NTEU President Tony Reardon: “Their letter puts House leadership on notice that any effort to slash federal salaries and pensions will be met with fierce, bipartisan resistance.”

John Hatton, NARFE deputy legislative director: “NARFE applauds the letter, and appreciates that these members of Congress are highlighting for their leadership the harmful and unfair consequences that would result from the budget proposals targeting the earned retirement benefits of federal employees and retirees.”

AFGE President J. David Cox Sr.: “Through [Bishop’s] leadership the military facilities in Utah have thrived, as have the Department of Defense civilians who have found him to be an honest broker and backer of a common-sense approach to defense issues.”

~~More from Federal Insider~~ the GOP letter lag far behind the 100 on a similar letter from House Democrats. Bishop said he made no attempt to secure a mass letter, preferring to include colleagues who really understand the issues. Apparently, not many Republicans do.

Once “the moral values and the ethical values” against cuts for current workers are explained to his colleagues, Bishop said “I think you’ll find there will be much more empathy” toward his position.

The Republicans’ letter noted that veterans make up more than 30 percent of the federal workforce, meaning Trump’s plan would hit those who have risked their lives for the nation.

The GOP members recalled previous workforce compensation cuts, including a three-year partial pay freeze, furloughs and higher retirement payments by new workers. “In total, these combined shared sacrifices by federal workers have amounted to \$182 billion since 2010,” the letter said.

“No one needs to remind us of the deficit and debt problem our nation faces, but federal employees are an easy political target,” the nine Republicans concluded. “In more ways than one, they have already repeatedly given at the office.”

But can they convince their Republican colleagues?

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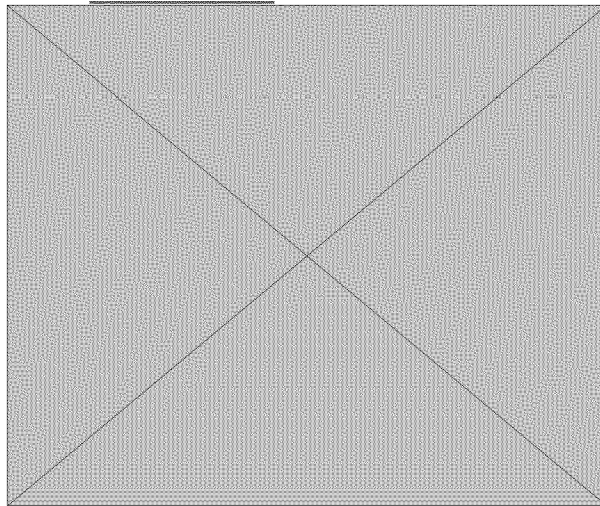
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