

**THE HONORABLE HOWARD COBLE  
STATEMENT  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL WORKFORCE, U.S. POSTAL SERVICE AND  
POLICY**

**LEGISLATIVE HEARING ON RETIREMENT READINESS, STRENGTHENING  
FEDERAL PENSION SYSTEM**

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25, 2012**

*H.R. 2652: A Bill to amend title 5, United States Code, to provide that Members must complete 12 years of creditable service in order to be vested in an annuity under the Federal Employee Retirement*

Good morning Chairman Ross, Ranking Member Lynch and other members of the subcommittee. Thank you for taking the time to schedule this important hearing.

Reforming congressional pensions is long overdue. From the feedback that I have received over the years, this program is unpopular with many taxpayers.

When I first ran for this office in 1984, I told citizens of the Sixth District that, if elected, I would not participate in the congressional pension program and would work to reform the system. As an aside, I did not participate in North Carolina's legislative pension system either.

Over the years, I have tried unsuccessfully to change the congressional pension program. I have introduced bills to abolish the

system and to make it equal to the pension that all federal employees receive. All of these past efforts died quickly and quietly. So, for the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, I tried a new approach: My bill would lengthen the time of service required before a Member would be eligible for participation in the pension program.

This legislation is H.R. 2652 and it extends the time required from five years to 12 years before a Member is vested in an annuity under the Federal Employee Retirement System. In order to avoid any constitutional concerns, the bill would only apply to Members who have not yet been elected to serve in Congress.

Extending the required years of service from five years to 12 years was a logical calculation. It is the equivalent of two terms in the Senate or six terms in the House or any combination of the two. It is also important to note the H.R. 2652 has no impact on other federal employees.

During the past few years, many workers and retirees in America have lost their pensions due to bankruptcy or the stock market. In my view, the decision to participate in the congressional pension program is a personal one, between the representative and his or her constituents. H.R. 2652 does not interfere with that

relationship; it simply raises the bar of eligibility for Members seeking a federal annuity. I think the bar should be raised – and considering the current economy – I think doing so now would be received very well by the American people.

I am not patting myself on the back for refusing the congressional pension; it's something that I pledged to my constituents and intend to honor. I deeply appreciate your consideration of H.R. 2652 and hope that you will support this legislation so we can begin the process of improving the congressional pension program.

Thank you again, I yield back the balance of my time.