

Waste Action Alert

*A publication of the RSC Sunset Caucus from co-chairs Kevin Brady (R-TX) and Jason Chaffetz (R-UT)
Rep. Tom Price (R-GA), RSC Chairman*

Eliminate the Death Gratuity for Members of Congress

December 8, 2010

Program or Item Targeted: The Death Gratuity for Members of Congress.

Cost of Program or Item: The death gratuity is equal to one year's salary payable to the survivors of a Member who dies in office. After Senator Byrd's death, his family received \$193,400 from United States taxpayers. After Senator Kennedy's death, his family received \$174,000 from United States taxpayers.

Background on Program or Item to Be Sunseted: Under current practice, the Congress provides out of the U.S. Treasury, a death benefit equal to one year's salary payable to the survivors of a Member who dies in office. Specifically, the Senate handbook says that upon the death of a senator who had been serving in office, "in the next appropriations bill, an item will be inserted for a gratuity to be paid to the widow(er) or other next- of-kin, in the amount of one-year's compensation."

Why This Program or Item Is Wasteful: While hard working American families struggle to pay death taxes to keep family farms, businesses, and other assets, Members of the Senate pay themselves this "gratuity." There is no better example of a practice in Washington that shows the American people that their elected Members of Congress are out of touch.

Originally, this gratuity was meant to serve as a form of life insurance for families of Members who untimely died in office, similar to practices found at some private sector companies. However, some Members today choose to stay in Congress during their elderly age until death, as opposed to retire.

MEMBER ACTION ITEM: Rep. Bill Posey has introduced legislation to end the death gratuity for Members of Congress. Members are encouraged to cosponsor this legislation by contacting Stuart Burns at Stuart.Burns@mail.house.gov.

If you would like to participate in eliminating wasteful programs with the RSC Sunset Caucus, please e-mail Brad.Watson@mail.house.gov.

If you have a bill or amendment to highlight in the next Waste Action Alert please contact Kimberly.Ellis@mail.house.gov.

Note: Not every item featured in the Waste Action Alerts is necessarily endorsed by the RSC. These Alerts highlight the individual initiatives of members of the RSC Sunset Caucus.

*"The RSC Sunset Caucus uncovers government waste and seeks to eliminate it,
working to sunset programs that taxpayers shouldn't be paying for."*