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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Jersey Union Pushes for Federal Legislation to Protect Retiree Earned Healthcare Benefits

The national retiree advocacy organization ProtectSeniors.Org is applauding the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 827 for actively and aggressively seeking passage of federal legislation to protect earned retiree healthcare benefits.

In a letter to U.S. Senator Robert Menendez, East Windsor based IBEW Local 827, which represents over 5,200 active union members and 8,000 retirees, across New Jersey is advocating its support for the Earned Retiree Healthcare Benefits Protection Act of 2011 (HR1322). The legislation would prevent employers from making post-retirement cuts to benefits that their retirees earned and paid for already during their working years.

According to the union, over 1 million New Jersey retirees (among an estimated 14.3 million retirees nationally) are covered by company sponsored retirement healthcare coverage. The IBEW letter asks Senator Menendez to introduce a companion bill in the Senate.

In the letter, William D. Huber, President and Business Manager of IBEW Local 827 said, "We are concerned for our retirees bargained for benefits... The Patient Protection & Affordable Care Act fails to protect our benefits and that is why we are seeking support for H.R. 1322 and would like to ask for your support by introducing a Senate companion to H.R. 1322. This legislation is needed to protect those who made corporations profitable today and is needed to keep taxpayer costs out of the healthcare system under the Patient Protection & Affordable Care Act." The letter was co-signed by Edward Johnson, State Chairman and Hudson Representative Retiree Committee for IBEW Local 827.

Washington, D.C. based ProtectSeniors.Org, the non profit advocacy group, which has been leading the charge on Capitol Hill and has been lobbying Members of Congress on behalf of millions of retirees. ProtectSeniors.Org members hail from 392 different companies, 45 labor union locals, 98 municipal, state and federal retiree groups in addition to 16 associations.

One such New Jersey retiree is Mike McFadden who worked at Verizon. He says Local 827's support for HR 1322 is critical. "Endorsing HR 1322 is just one of the steps that the union has taken to protect their members' benefits. We need to ensure that America's retirees are not casualties of the national healthcare struggle."

Paul Miller, Executive Director of ProtectSeniors.Org said, "A benefit of this legislation to American tax payers is that HR 1322 has already been paid for out of retirees pockets over their working years by their taking less in salary and paid time off over decades-long careers with their former employers. America's retirees are not here asking for a handout or a bailout. We merely want companies to live up to the financial commitments they made. Give us the health benefits we earned and paid for over decades of loyal service."

Among the bill's current New Jersey co-sponsors are House of Representatives members Hon. Robert Andrews (D-NJ) and Steve Rothman (D-NJ).

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