

LETTERS TO CONGRESS

Here is a model letter from which you might draw in fashioning your own appeal to members of congress for legislation to gain pension benefits. Feel free to rewrite this--your own wording is best, more spontaneous.

Hon. (name of senator or congressman)
Senate (or House of Representatives)
Washington, DC (20510 for senate, 20515 for house)

Dear Senator (or Congressman) (give surname)

I write to ask you to introduce legislation to provide retirement and survivor benefits to about 50 former CIA spouses who were left out of the CIA Spouses' Retirement Equity Act of 1982 (PL 97-269). While acknowledging the service and sacrifice of CIA spouses and their right to pensions, PL 97-269 failed to include spouses divorced before the effective date of the act (November 15, 1982), even though those earlier divorced spouses were the very embodiment of the injury Congress sought to remedy. I urge you now to complete the job by providing for these 50 spouses who were unfairly left out.

Former CIA spouses (including those who benefit from PL 97-269) also sorely need health insurance benefits. The 98th Congress extended government health benefits to former spouses of Civil Service employees. The 99th Congress should extend these benefits to former CIA spouses as a matter of equity.

The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence held hearings on HR 5305 on September 12, 1984. That bill might serve as a model for the legislation I urge you to introduce. HR 5197 (98th Congress) which dealt with former Foreign Service spouses offers another model.

Your letter will have more impact if you follow this with a brief personal background statement. Mention the length of your Agency service and something of the trials and tribulations of such service. Include some indication of your present need for benefits. Keep it brief, 100 words is long.

We should concentrate first on the members of the intelligence committees in both houses of congress. A list of the committee members is attached. Write to your own congressman and your senators. In any case write to at least one member--the chairman, if you have

POINTERS ON VISITING CAPITOL HILL

WHO - home congressman, local congressional delegation and members of relevant committees.

- identify your connection to district, "I am from Iowa, vote there but am temporarily living in McLean" or "Although I live here, all of my family live in _____ and vote in your district."

VISIT - telephone office (224-3121) and make appointment with legislative aide who works on this issue, i.e. "I would like to talk with the person who handles women's issues, pension reform or foreign affairs."

- emphasize requested meeting is to discuss legislation not individual problem.
- be brief; try to keep visit under 15 minutes.
- start with legislative history of Foreign Service Act, P.L.96-465,
- continue with specific talking points,
- tie up arguments with own personal history including specific hardships you experienced during your foreign service life, (major illnesses of children, evacuations, civil disorder, natural disasters, damage or loss of HHE, etc.).
- conclude with AAFSW proposal.
- ask for reaction of aide and expected position of congressman.
- leave position papers, your name, address and telephone number.

FOLLOW-UP - obtain full name (with proper spelling) and address of staffer.

- write note of thanks for the visit.
- call after 3-4 days for position of congressman; continue calls until a position obtained.