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**America needs pension relief in HEROES Act — NOT the GROW Act**

May 15— With the House of Representatives poised to vote on the next COVID-19 relief package, known as the HEROES Act, the Pension Rights Center applauds the congressional leaders who have included within the massive bill the important provisions of the Emergency Pension Plan Relief Act (EPPRA) which will strengthen the nation’s multiemployer pension system. **PRC, however, urges Congress to strip from the package the misguided Giving Retirement Options to Workers Act (GROW Act), which would undermine this all-important system.**

By including EPPRA in the HEROES Act, Congress will not only help save workers’ and retirees’ pensions, but also stabilize for decades to come the federal agency that insures our nation’s private pension plans, the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC).

“More than 1 million workers and retirees have been closely watching Congress and waiting for policymakers to finally pass legislation that ensures full payment of their promised pensions, which they earned through years of toil,” said Karen Friedman, the PRC’s executive vice president.

“First, their hopes were buoyed in 2019 when the House passed a bill designed to protect their benefits, known as the Butch Lewis Act. But that legislation failed to advance in the Senate. Now, both the retirees and the PRC are excited that Congress has included the well-crafted EPPRA within the latest COVID-19 bill. By doing so, Congress recognizes that those workers and retirees who helped build this country and who will benefit from the legislation should be permitted to receive the retirement income they earned through hard work and playing by the rules. We urge all members of the House and Senate to make these pension rescue provisions a reality for these workers and retirees and for their families.”

PRC strongly supports EPPRA because it shores up underfunded plans by providing the PBGC with the funding to take on certain liabilities of ailing plans. This “partitioning” process will ensure that the plans survive for the long-term and are able to pay in full the earned benefits owed to workers and retirees. The bill also increases the guarantees paid by the PBGC when plans fail and would restore benefits to retirees who have already had their benefits cut because of the unfair provisions of the Multiemployer Pension Reform Act of 2014. EPPRA shares a structure similar to a proposal advanced by Senate Finance

Committee Chairman Charles Grassley (R-IA) and Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN).

“We believe that it’s appropriate for EPPRA to be part of the HEROES Act since those most at risk of losing benefits in these multiemployer plans are the very same workers who are risking their lives to protect us in this time of crisis. They are the truck drivers who are transporting food and supplies, the nurses and health care workers at the front lines, the grocery store workers who are keeping us fed, the laborers who are building our hospitals, and the musicians who, despite social distancing, keep on playing for us online to soothe our anxiety” Friedman said.

“These are America’s unsung heroes who do – and did – the essential jobs that we all are depending on in this time of lockdown.”

Unlike EPPRA, which will strengthen failing multiemployer plans and protect workers and retirees and the PBGC, **passage of the GROW Act would undermine the multiemployer plan system by weakening currently well-funded plans and creating new inferior plans that do not provide guaranteed benefits. It would also lead to the underfunding of the PBGC.**

PRC urges the leaders of the House of Representatives to drop the GROW Act from the HEROES Act.

The GROW Act is also [vigorously opposed](#) by AARP, the Western Conference of Teamsters, the SEIU, IBEW, Steelworkers, Machinists, Boilermakers and other unions and organizations.

The Center also cheers inclusion in the HEROES Act of a provision that would provide grants to community-based organizations to help low-income divorced women and survivors of domestic abuse receive their court-awarded retirement benefits. This provision was originally introduced by Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and House Members Jan Schakowksy (D-IL) and Lauren Underwood (D-IL) as part of the Women’s Retirement Protection Act (S.975, H.R. 2005).

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