October 23, 2017

Support the Taxpayer-Funded Pension Disclosure Act, H.R. 3200

On behalf of our activist community, we urge you to contact your representative and ask him or her to support the Taxpayer-Funded Pension Disclosure Act, H.R. 3200, introduced by Rep. Ron DeSantis (R-Fla.). Currently, federal pension data is completely hidden from American taxpayers. Releasing data on federal pensions will require an act of Congress, and this bill is leading the way.

Every year, the federal government pays $125 billion in tax dollars for federal retirees' pensions. That's more than the entire state budget of Texas – and still, there is a no transparency surrounding who receives how much, after how long, and for which federal agency.

Websites such as OpenTheBooks.com post more than 2 million disclosed *active* federal salaries online. See an interactive map of all civil service federal employee names, agency, title, salary, and bonus.[1]

Yet, the Obama administration's U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) denied a Freedom of Information Act request, asking for a full list of individual retirement annuity payouts. In its rejection letter, OPM called the request "*clearly an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.*" Really?

The argument made by the Obama administration is incoherent. Federal workers' active salaries and bonuses are made public already; the issue of privacy is a moot point.

Taxpayers deserve to know the granular details surrounding the lucrative pensions of career bureaucrats and members of Congress. Basic questions deserve answers: How many years were worked, how much money was paid-in and by whom, how quickly did they break-even on their own contributions, and just how much did taxpayers finance?

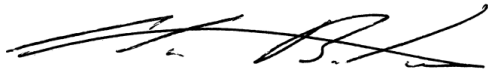[1] Open the Books, Retrieved October 23, 2017 https://www.openthebooks.com/map/?Map=5873&MapType=Pin

Consider infamous ex-IRS official Lois Lerner who invoked her Fifth Amendment protections during her Congressional testimony. Wouldn't it be nice to see her pension information? Estimates by two Washington think tanks vary by more than $52,000 annually, or nearly $2 million in lifetime payout. Unfortunately, no one knows the exact number because this information is kept secret by the Washington elites.

The Taxpayer-Funded Pension Disclosure Act reverses restrictions and brings sunlight to federal pension data. Keeping public scrutiny out of the decision-making process leaves room for fraud, corruption, and back-door deals within the federal government.

Current policy keeps taxpayers in the dark. It's time to expose wasteful spending where it exists and make the federal government as cost-effective as possible – and that process begins with transparency. After all, we can't reform what we can't see.

For these reasons, I urge you to contact your representative and ask them to support the Taxpayer-Funded Pension Disclosure Act, H.R. 3200.

Sincerely,

Adam Brandon
President, FreedomWorks