



February 24, 2021

The Honorable Bill Posey  
2150 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Posey,

On behalf of National Taxpayers Union, the nation's oldest taxpayer advocacy organization, I write to express our strong support for your legislation to end the questionable practice of Congressional death gratuity payments. If signed into law, H.R. 412 would prohibit the tradition of giving hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars to families of members who unfortunately pass away while serving in the Congress. We believe this sensible proposal will save taxpayer dollars and should be enacted into law.

The tradition of providing taxpayer money to the family of a deceased member of Congress goes as far back as 1880. According to NTU Foundation, our research arm, since 2000 Congress has given thirty-two death gratuity payments, with each recipient receiving at least \$174,000 - the typical salary for a member of Congress. In total, NTUF calculates the cost to taxpayers exceeds \$5 million. Taxpayers should question whether this is an effective use of their hard-earned money because, in most cases, this money flows to individuals with a net worth far above the typical American family.

For example, notable recipients of the payment include the families of Senator Ted Kennedy (net worth of \$162 million), Senator Frank Lautenberg (net worth of \$56 million), and Senator John McCain (net worth of \$16 million).

Thankfully, your legislation would end this practice once and for all. Prohibiting the death gratuity would make only a very small contribution to the spending restraint needed to put America's fiscal house in order, but that's all the more reason that Congress should consider taking action to stop the process. Members of Congress generally come from wealthy backgrounds and don't need additional handouts from taxpayers on top of the generous benefits they already receive. Importantly, this would not impact any other benefits that heirs may be eligible for under federal law, but would prohibit special supplemental payments to widows at taxpayer expense.

The death gratuity tradition is outmoded in the modern era given the availability of options for retirement savings and life insurance. This benefit, coupled with generous salary, health, and retirement perks, make it quite lucrative to be a member of Congress compared to regular citizens in the private sector. Given the massive debt obligations run up by Congress, taking this step is the least they can do to contribute to future fiscal stability. We support H.R. 412 and look forward to working with you to get it signed into law.

Sincerely,

Thomas Aiello  
Policy and Government Affairs Manager