

## Waste Action Alert

*A publication of the RSC Sunset Caucus from co-chairs Kevin Brady (R-TX) and Jason Chaffetz (R-UT)  
Rep. Jim Jordan (R-OH), RSC Chairman*

### **Eliminate the Death Gratuity for Members of Congress**

*October 26, 2011*

**Program or Item Targeted:** The Death Gratuity for Members of Congress.

**Cost of Program or Item:** The death gratuity is equal to one year's salary payable to the survivors of a Member who dies in office. The two most recent recipients were the estates of the late Senator Robert Byrd and the late Senator Ted Kennedy. After Senator Byrd's death, his estate received \$193,400 from United States taxpayers. After Senator Kennedy's death, his estate received \$174,000 from United States taxpayers.

**Background on Program or Item to Be Sunseted:** Under current practice, the Congress provides out of the U.S. Treasury, a death benefit equal to one year's salary payable to the survivors of a Member who dies in office. Specifically, the Senate handbook says that upon the death of a Senator who had been serving in office, "in the next appropriations bill, an item will be inserted for a gratuity to be paid to the widow(er) or other next- of-kin, in the amount of one-year's compensation."

**Why This Program or Item Is Wasteful:** While hardworking American families struggle to pay for Washington's spending excesses, including their own life insurance policies, the survivors of Members of the House and Senate who die in office receive a taxpayer funded gratuity payment. Members of the House and Senate can afford to purchase their own life insurance and there is no need for this taxpayer handout.

Originally, this gratuity was meant to serve as a form of life insurance for families of Members who untimely died in office, similar to practices found at some private sector companies. Members of Congress should be as responsible for providing for their families in the event of death as the everyday Americans who elect them.

**MEMBER ACTION ITEM:** Reps. Bill Posey and Virginia Foxx have introduced H.R. 3127 to prohibit the payment of a death gratuity for Members of Congress. Members are encouraged to cosponsor this legislation by contacting Marcus Brubaker at [Marcus.Brubaker@mail.house.gov](mailto:Marcus.Brubaker@mail.house.gov).

If you would like to participate in eliminating wasteful programs with the RSC Sunset Caucus, please e-mail [Cyrus.Artz@mail.house.gov](mailto:Cyrus.Artz@mail.house.gov).

Note: Not every item featured in the Waste Action Alerts is necessarily endorsed by the RSC. These Alerts highlight the individual initiatives of members of the RSC Sunset Caucus.

*"The RSC Sunset Caucus uncovers government waste and seeks to eliminate it,  
working to sunset programs that taxpayers shouldn't be paying for."*