

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JOHN BOEHNER
CHAIRMAN
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE**

April 26, 2001 Markup of H.R. 10,
The “Comprehensive Retirement Security and Pension Reform Act of 2001”

Today, we mark up a bill that will directly improve the retirement security of American workers. H.R. 10, the “Comprehensive Retirement Security and Pension Reform Act of 2001,” makes retirement security more available to millions of workers by (1) expanding small business retirement plans, which cover 75% of the workforce, (2) allowing workers to save more, (3) addressing the needs of an increasingly mobile workforce through greater portability, (4) making pensions more secure, and (5) cutting the red tape that has hamstrung employers who want to establish pension plans for their employees.

This legislation, introduced by Representatives Rob Portman and Ben Cardin, is truly bipartisan. Last Congress, the Committee reported a virtually identical bill, H.R. 1102, by a bipartisan voice vote. In July 2000, the House passed H.R. 1102 by a vote of 401-25. I am very pleased that the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Employer-Employee Relations Subcommittee, Sam Johnson and Rob Andrews, have joined me in strong support of this important legislation, the most significant overhaul of pension law in 25 years.

The Committee has made every effort to maintain this bipartisan approach. Both this Congress and last, we have kept our Democratic counterparts and the Administration fully informed as to procedural and substantive issues related to the bill. We have solicited their input and sought to accommodate their concerns. In addition, we have worked closely with our colleagues on the Ways and Means Committee and I expect that our product will be merged with the result of the markup by Ways and Means for consideration by the full House in the near future.

Rarely has such ambitious legislation earned such broad support. About 165 Republicans and 120 Democrats are cosponsors. More than 100 groups have endorsed the bill, both business and union – from AFSCME, the Teamsters, the Laborers International, and the National Education Association (NEA) to the U.S. Chamber, the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), the American Benefits Council, and the American Council of Life Insurers (ACLI).

Today, the Committee will again mark up those provisions of the bill within our jurisdiction, those amending the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA). The bill contains many ERISA amendments to simplify pensions and promote retirement coverage, including: granting relief from excessive PBGC premiums for new small business plans; accelerating the vesting of workers’ accounts; repealing and modifying a wide range of unnecessary and outdated rules and regulations; providing more frequent benefits statements to workers; requiring enhanced disclosure and other protections when future pension benefits are reduced (as in the case of conversion to a cash balance plan); and repealing the so-called “full

funding limit” that arbitrarily limits defined benefit plan funding to a less than actuarially sound level.

We are committed to strengthening the retirement security of workers and their families by expanding private pension coverage and protecting their pensions and retirement savings. Unnecessarily complex regulations that have little benefit reduce the incentive for employers to offer pension plans. Congress must increase access to pension plans by further simplifying regulations which today make it difficult for many employers to offer pension plans. H.R. 10 is a significant step towards achieving these goals.

Pension reform is a critical issue for our nation's increasingly mobile workforce, and it spans the generation gap. It concerns both younger workers, whose retirement security is most in doubt today, and older workers, the 76 million Baby Boomers who are now approaching retirement age. Whether you are an older worker, a member of “Generation X,” or one who falls somewhere in between, we all have a stake in this issue. And through passage of this bill, we can all take credit for making a real difference in the lives of our constituents.