

‘Frozen’ State Retirement Pensions for Residents Overseas

OSPA has given strong and active support to the campaigns by pensioner groups to change the British Government’s policy of not indexing the State Retirement Pensions (SRP) paid to most pensioners who contributed to the National Insurance Scheme while employed in Britain but who now live overseas. There are only a few countries where such pensioners receive annual increases to their SRP according to the rate of inflation in Britain. The countries where most of the pensioners live are Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa, and many others too, and those are where the pensions are not up-rated, hence ‘frozen’.

Judicial proceedings

In 2002 a test case was lodged in the High Court in Britain by a pensioner in South Africa, claiming that the discrimination was in breach of her Human Rights. OSPA made a financial contribution to the costs of the case and persuaded other public service pensioner organisations to do the same. That case ended in defeat in the House of Lords in May 2005.

The case was then submitted on appeal to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Strasbourg in 2006. OSPA made a second financial contribution to the costs and again persuaded other bodies to do likewise. We also urged our members overseas to join one of what were then several separate organisations representing the pensioners concerned. Those organisations then came together and formed the International Consortium of British Pensioners (ICBP), based in Canada. The Grand Chamber of the ECHR delivered its ruling in March 2010, rejecting the claim, and that was the end of the road in terms of judicial proceedings.

The campaign

The ICBP now carries on the campaign in Britain, engaging vigorously with the Government and the political parties, in liaison with other groups including OSPA. OSPA continues to support the campaign and our biannual journal carries update reports. One current strand in the campaign is to encourage residents overseas to register as UK voters, if eligible, in order to keep up the pressure on MPs to argue the case for a change in Government policy.

Related websites

International Consortium of British Pensioners

<http://pensionjustice.org/>

BPIA – British Pensions in Australia

<http://youle.info/bpia-blog>

The Electoral Commission

www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/register_to_vote/british_citizens_living_abroad.aspx

Votes for Expat Brits

www.votes-for-expat-brits.com/Sign-up-Poll.php

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