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Statement by U.S. Representative Robert J. Dold
Tenth District, Illinois
House Oversight and Government Reform
Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, U.S. Postal Service and Labor Policy
Hearing on
“Retirement Readiness: Strengthening the Federal Pension System”

Thank you Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Lynch for inviting me to testify at today’s subcommittee hearing on how Congress can strengthen retirement benefits and the pension system for federal employees.

Mr. Chairman, according to the Congressional Research Service, over the past 50 years, Members of Congress have been convicted of at least sixteen different felonies including receiving illegal gratuities and bribery, conspiracy, extortion, income tax evasion, and embezzlement and theft of public funds.

As trusted public servants, our constituents expect us to serve with the highest level of integrity and expect that we be held accountable for our actions. Central to that public trust is an understanding that Members of Congress who are convicted of public corruption crimes should not be entitled to the benefit of a taxpayer-funded, congressional pension.

However, Mr. Chairman, a recent National Taxpayers Union study estimates that “federal lawmakers convicted of various crimes are currently drawing a combined pension benefit of more than \$800,000 per year.” This figure does not even include convicted lawmakers who are so far ineligible for receiving their pension, or whose public corruption cases are still pending in the courts. As elected officials, I believe we must hold ourselves to a higher standard as we have pledged to uphold, protect, and defend the Constitution and the laws of the United States.

On September 14, 2007, the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act (P.L. 110-81) was signed into law by President Bush after receiving broad, bipartisan support in both the House and the Senate. This sweeping reform forces Members of Congress to forfeit their congressional pension if they are convicted of any of ten covered public corruption crimes.

Mr. Chairman, while the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act made necessary changes to the rules governing a Member’s pension, the law holds that Members only forfeit their pension if the crimes for which they were convicted occurred *while* they served in Congress. Unfortunately, we have seen former Members of Congress convicted of felonies following their congressional tenures. For instance, former Congressmen John Rowland, and more recently, Rod Blagojevich, were both convicted of public corruption crimes while they served as Governors of their respective states. Both of these convicted felons who shattered the public trust however, Mr. Chairman, remain eligible for their taxpayer-funded federal pensions.

This is why I joined with my good friend and colleague from Illinois, Representative Quigley, to introduce H.R. 2162, the Congressional Integrity and Pension Forfeiture Act of 2011. As the National Taxpayer Union study illustrates, current law needs to be strengthened to ensure that both current and former Members of Congress who breach federal corruption laws, and thus the public trust, do not receive a taxpayer-funded congressional pension. No present or former Member of Congress deserves a federal pension if he or she is convicted of a public corruption felony while still serving in a publicly elected office, regardless of when they committed the corrupt act in question.

Our legislation builds upon the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act to prohibit a former Member of Congress from receiving a congressional pension if they are convicted of a covered offense that occurred while subsequently serving in *any* publicly-elected office – as the President of the United States, Vice President, or as an elected official of a State or local government.

Additionally, the Congressional Integrity and Pension Forfeiture Act strengthens current law by expanding the list of covered public corruption crimes to include twenty additional public corruption crimes. Some additional offenses would include wrongfully influencing or injuring an officer or juror, attempting to evade a tax, and willfully violating laws related to the promise of appointment by a candidate. Mr. Chairman, in my submitted record there is a full list of the twenty common-sense additions our legislation seeks to add to the list of covered offenses.

Mr. Chairman, in the face of soaring deficits and a crippling debt, U.S. taxpayers should not be on the hook for the retirement benefits of elected lawmakers convicted of a felony. A breach of law by a trusted, elected official, is a serious offense that should have serious consequences. This legislation will help in our ongoing efforts to restore public trust in this institution and those who serve in it.

I thank you again for calling this important hearing and allowing me to come before the Subcommittee to share this legislation designed to further protect taxpayers from exposure to crimes committed by those they elect as representatives in Washington. I would also like to thank the other Members here today who have also put forth serious reforms to the Member pension program and who recognize the importance of protecting taxpayers and restoring public trust.

My office will be happy to answer any additional questions about H.R. 2162.

Offenses Requiring Forfeiture of Congressional Pensions

P.L. 110-181	Congressional Integrity and Pension Forfeiture Act Additions
<p>Title 18, section: 201: bribery of public officials and witnesses, 219: acting as agents of foreign principals, 1343: wire fraud including as part of a scheme to deprive citizens of honest services, 1957: engaging in monetary transactions in property derived from specified unlawful activity, 1512: tampering with a witness, victim, or an informant, chapter 96: relating to racketeer influenced and corrupt organizations, 371: conspiracy to commit offense or to defraud United States to the extent that the conspiracy constitutes an act to commit one of the offenses listed above, 1621: perjury in relation to any offense listed above, or 1622: subordination of perjury in relation to any offense listed above</p> <p>104(a) of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act of 1977: bribery of foreign officials</p>	<p>Title 18, section: 203: compensation to Members of Congress, officers, and others in matters affecting the Government, 204: practice in United States Court of Federal Claims or the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit by Members of Congress, 286: conspiracy to defraud the Government with respect to claims, 287: false, fictitious or fraudulent claims, 597: expenditures to influence voting, 599: promise of appointment by candidate, 602: solicitation of political contributions, 606: intimidation to secure political contributions, 607: place of solicitation, 641: public money, property or records, 666: Theft or bribery concerning programs receiving Federal funds 1001: statements or entries generally, 1341: frauds and swindles, 1503: influencing or injuring officer or juror, 1505: obstruction of justice, 1951: interference with commerce by threats or violence, 1952: interstate and foreign travel or transportation in aid of racketeering enterprises, 1956: relating to laundering of monetary instruments, or 1962: prohibited activities/racketeering</p> <p>Section 7201 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986: attempt to evade or defeat tax</p>

Robert J. Dold is a third-generation resident of the 10th District of Illinois. After high school, Bob continued a family tradition and earned a BA from Denison University. His educational credentials include a law degree from Indiana University, where he was selected by his classmates to give the commencement address and an MBA from Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management.

Prior to being elected to Congress, Bob ran Rose Pest Solutions, a small business founded in 1860, the oldest pest management company in the United States. Rose Pest Solutions is headquartered in Northfield, IL, and serves families and businesses throughout the 10th District and beyond. As a small business owner and operator, Bob has faced many of the challenges confronting business leaders who struggle to remain competitive and successful, and he understands the pressures on families to work hard and save money for the future in an uncertain economy.

Bob gathered extensive and diverse experience both as a small business owner, and in Washington, DC, where he worked on campaign finance reform during his tenure as an investigative counsel for the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee.

In Congress, Bob is focused on bipartisan solutions for creating jobs, protecting the environment, keeping the homeland secure and ending human rights injustices around the world. As the first Member of the Freshman Class to pass a bill, Bob has stayed true to his commitment to provide independent leadership for a stronger economy.

Today Bob lives on the North Shore, just a few blocks away from his childhood home, his church, and the public schools he attended. Bob and his wife Danielle are the proud parents of three children – Harper, Bobby, and Honor.

Bob is also an active member of his local community. For the past ten years he has been the Scoutmaster for Troop 13 Senior Scouts, the same troop where he became an Eagle Scout. The ideals of the Eagle Scouts - integrity, personal responsibility, and community leadership - describe Bob's personal perspective and compelled him to run for public office.