

Ian Blackford calls for a debate on Frozen Pensions - Frozen British Pensions

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On 24 March 2016 APPG Vice Chair Ian Blackford MP took the opportunity of the Easter Adjournment Debate to call for a debate on the Uprating Regulations that freeze overseas State Pensions.

Ian Blackford argued that given the Uprating Regulations would come into effect in early April, when the Commons would be on recess there should be an opportunity to debate the matter first.

“The uprating regulations that deprive overseas pensioners of the uprating adjustment to their state pensions are being forced through this House without a proper and full debate.... I wonder how many Members will need to sign that praying motion before they will do so.”

Ian Blackford criticised the lack of consistency of treatment of overseas British pensioners. Pointing out anomalies arising from historic bilateral deals and pointing out that there was no need for new bilateral agreements for the government to take action.

He also raised the possible danger for the 400,000 UK pensioners living in the EU, who may find themselves with a frozen pension if Britain votes to leave the European Union in June.

“I believe that the House should have the opportunity to debate the matter, which not only leaves 550,000 UK pensioners facing hardship, but discourages many UK citizens living in the UK from returning to their country of origin, as many wish to do in their retirement.”

Ian Blackford gave three three examples of how pensioners are affected.

- Abhik Bonnerjee, now 73, moved from India to Glasgow in 1960. He worked in the UK for 38 years, in shipbuilding, steel manufacture and the food industry. He also owned an Indian restaurant for six years. Abhik returned to India in 1997 and reached the state pension retirement age in 2008, when it was paid at £87.30 a week. Having made all the required national insurance contributions, if Abhik were still in the UK today he would get £115.95—28% more. The decline in his real-term income has left Abhik concerned about losing his home. He now feels that he may have to move back to the United Kingdom.

- Rita Young, who is 78, lives in Peterborough in the UK. She retired in 2002, aged 67, having enjoyed a long career in market research and as a community volunteer. Rita’s son moved to work in Australia

some time ago and now has a family there. Since being widowed, Rita has wanted to join her son and grandchildren in Australia but has felt unable to do so because of the prospect of a frozen pension. As she gets older, Rita finds daily life increasingly difficult, especially as she does not have family around her. She is deeply saddened that she is not able to be with her family during the later stages of her life. It does not seem fair that the Government can stop uprating just because someone says, "I want to be with my family."

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Former college lecturer, Anne Puckridge, now 91, lived and worked in the UK all her working life, paying mandatory national insurance contributions throughout that time. In 2002, aged 77, she finally retired and decided to move to Canada to be with her daughter and grandchildren, who had moved to Calgary. Fourteen years on, Anne, who served as an intelligence officer in the Women's Royal Naval Service in the second world war, is struggling to live on a frozen pension of £75.20 a week. Anne now feels that she will be forced to move back to Britain because her pension will no longer cover day-to-day expenses, and she is increasingly reliant on her daughter to get by. That cannot be right or just. As she has said, "It's the small things, and the injustice, that is really getting to me. I value my independence, but I can't go on living on the breadline and I don't want to inflict this on my family. As well as ever-increasing poverty, I feel a sense of stress and shame, which is affecting my health."

"The Government ought to withdraw the measure and pay UK pensioners at home and abroad their due state pension, with the same uprating adjustment, in the interests of fairness and equality."

A video of Ian Blackford's speech can be viewed [HERE](#).

The Hansard is [HERE](#).