

State pension is frozen for 560,000 British expatriates

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As well as Monday's House of Commons debate on the new state pension and how it disadvantages million of women, there is another important pensions event in Westminster next week that is likely to receive less publicity. On Tuesday, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Frozen British Pensions – which includes shadow Pensions minister Angela Rayner – meets to discuss an international unfairness.

The important issue they're discussing is simple: around 560,000 British pensioners live in countries where the state pension they receive is frozen at the same rate as when they left the UK. Meanwhile, another 600,000 pensioners living abroad benefit from a state pension that rises every year as if they still lived in the UK.

Is this fair? I don't believe so. Successive governments have left out in the cold elderly war heroes and other British citizens retiring to mainly former Commonwealth countries. But some simple reciprocal agreements with those countries could solve the problem.

In fact, Australia and India have this month struck a pensions deal that allows expats from each country to receive the state pension of their home country without having to return home. That's all the British pensioners want.

John Markham, director of campaign group the International Consortium of British Pensioners, told me: "This news demonstrates just how out of step Britain now is with international norms on payment

of full state pensions to its overseas pensioners. If India can afford it, why can't we?"

Why indeed? He added: "We urge the Government to reverse this unjust policy and ensure that all British pensioners – no matter where they live – receive the full state pension they have paid for and deserve."