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## **NRLN Action Alert**

### **Congress Must See that TVA Funds Pension Plan and Receives ERISA Protection**

This Action Alert is to urge all 8,000 members of the NRLN grassroots organization in the seven states in which the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) operates to send sample letters to their members of Congress. I am asking this on behalf of the NRLN's latest Chapter, the Tennessee Valley Authority Retirees Coalition (TVARC), whose members urgently need your support. Their pension plan is dangerously underfunded and the participants have no PBGC protection available to them.

First, a little background that TVA retirees already know but other NRLN grassroots advocates need to know. Congress formed the TVA in 1933 as a federal public works project entity to help the country survive the Great Depression, raise employment levels in the Tennessee Valley and simultaneously harness energy from Valley Rivers while managing and preserving Valley natural resources. TVA workers had secure jobs but no pension plan until one was negotiated in 1939.

The TVA pension plan was exempted from protections available to other federal workers by the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) and later the Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS). Instead, the TVA plan is governed by rules set forth in the Tennessee Valley Authority Retirement System (TVARS) and its board, acting as an independent entity charged to represent plan participants as their Trustee and Fiduciary. The funding of the pension plan is the responsibility of the TVA. In 1974, when the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) was enacted, Congress exempted the TVA pension plan on the basis that TVA was a public agency, despite the fact that plan participants were in a single-employer defined benefit plan.

Today, the TVA pension plan for 35,000 retirees and employees is \$6.0 billion underfunded, leaving it at a 53% funding level, largely because of TVA's failure to provide adequate funding that would otherwise have been required under ERISA rules.

On February 29, Mike Moseley, president of TVARC, and I co-signed a letter that was sent to Congressional committees, subcommittees and the Congressional TVA Caucus that have responsibility for TVA oversight. The letter also went to every U.S. Senator and Representative in the seven-state TVA Region comprised of Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia.

The letter asked these members of Congress to take action to protect the TVA pension plan participants from potential economic disaster due to the dangerous underfunding of the TVA pension plan. Specifically, we asked that the TVA be encouraged to make adequate funding contributions to the plan. Also, we asked Congress to re-designate the TVA pension plan so that its participants can be placed under the protection of ERISA as the status of the TVA as a company has changed substantially since its inception.

We believe it will be very helpful to the TVA retirees and employees for everyone who receives this Action Alert to send the sample letter, with your personal comments added, to your members of Congress. When one group of retirees has their retirement income security at risk,

it is important that all NRLN grassroots advocates speak out on their behalf to members of Congress.

Bill Kadereit, President  
National Retiree Legislative Network

Here are the steps to follow to contact your members of Congress:

1. [Click here to access the NRLN's sample letters](#). The NRLN Action Network system will identify for you which letter is to be sent to your U.S. Representative and which letter to be sent to your two U.S. Senators. If you have a problem with this link, go to [www.nrln.org](http://www.nrln.org) and click on the "Take Action Now!" near the top of the NRLN website home page.
2. When you have accessed the NRLN sample letters, to the left of the letters are windows to type in your contact information required by members of Congress so they know they are receiving an email from a constituent. If you have sent previous NRLN emails to your members of Congress your contact information may be automatically displayed.
3. Personalize the letters by editing in your own comments.
4. Click on the "Preview" button and the letters addressed to your Representative and two Senators will appear. Their names will be automatically added in the letter's greeting. Check to make sure the letters to your members of Congress appear correct and then click "Send".

**There are other features of our Congress Web service that you may find useful: Please consider using these additional tools. We need to grow our support base and you can help by spreading the word!**

1. After you have emailed your letter to your members of Congress, you will have the option to select a number of publications from a news media list to send a message to the editor. With regard to the present Action Alert, the composed message asks the editors to **write an editorial in support of the nearly 35,000 TVA retirees, employees and family members whose pension plan is underfunded by \$6 billion.**
2. You have the option, if you have a Facebook page, to click on a Facebook icon to post a link to the NRLN's Action Alert on your Facebook page. After you click on the Facebook icon the link to the Action Alert will appear and the option to "Write Something". You may want to type in something like **Email the NRLN's sample letter to your members of Congress**. Click the "Share" icon to post your comment and the Action Alert link.
3. You also have the option, if you have a Facebook account, to post the NRLN's message on your Representative's or Senator's Facebook page. Most members of Congress have a Facebook page. Click on the attachment to this email for the steps to follow to post on your legislator's Facebook page.
4. Also after emailing your letter there is an option to post to your Twitter account if you have one. Scroll down to "Send a Tweet" and click on the "Submit" buttons to send the short message to each of your members of Congress.

5. Scroll down further to "Tell a Friend" and you will have the option to quickly email a message to your friends to ask them to access the NRLN Action Alert. Simply type or paste in their email addresses into a window.
6. Further down the webpage is "Share on your Web Site" that is only for the use of Webmasters.