Public Law 94–554
94th Congress

An Act

To amend section 376 of title 28, United States Code, in order to reform and update the existing program for annuities to survivors of Federal Justices and judges.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That this Act may be cited as the “Judicial Survivors' Annuities Reform Act”.

SEC. 2. That section 376 of title 28 of the United States Code is amended to read as follows:

“§ 376. Annuities for survivors of certain judicial officials of the United States

(a) For the purposes of this section—

(1) ‘judicial official’ means:

(A) a Justice or judge of the United States, as defined by section 451 of this title;

(B) a judge of the United States District Court for the District of the Canal Zone, the District Court of Guam, or the District Court of the Virgin Islands;

(C) a Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts, after he or she has filed a waiver under subsection (a) of section 611 of this title;

(D) a Director of the Federal Judicial Center, after he or she has filed a waiver under subsection (b) of section 627 of this title; or

(E) an administrative assistant to the Chief Justice of the United States, after he or she has filed a waiver in accordance with both subsection (a) of section 677 and subsection (a) of section 611 of this title;

who notifies the Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts in writing of his or her intention to come within the purview of this section within six months after (i) the date upon which he or she takes office, (ii) the date upon which he or she marries, or (iii) the date upon which the Judicial Survivors' Annuities Reform Act becomes effective;

(2) ‘retirement salary’ means:

(A) in the case of a Justice or judge of the United States, as defined by section 451 of this title, salary paid (i) after retirement from regular active service under subsection (b) of section 371 or subsection (a) of section 372 of this title, or (ii) after retirement from office by resignation on salary under subsection (a) of section 371 of this title;

(B) in the case of a judge of the United States District Court for the District of the Canal Zone, the District Court of Guam, or the District Court of the Virgin Islands, salary paid after retirement from office (i) by resignation on salary under section 373 of this title or (ii) by removal or failure of reappointment after not less than ten years' judicial service;

(C) in the case of a Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts, an annuity paid under subsection (b) or (c) of section 611 of this title;
“(D) in the case of a Director of the Federal Judicial Center, an annuity paid under subsection (c) or (d) of section 627 of this title; and
“(E) in the case of an administrative assistant to the Chief Justice of the United States, an annuity paid in accordance with both subsection (a) of section 677 and subsection (a) of section 611 of this title;
“(3) ‘widow’ means the surviving wife of a ‘judicial official’, who:
“(A) has been married to him for at least one year on the day of his death; or
“(B) is the mother of issue by that marriage;
“(4) ‘widower’ means the surviving husband of a ‘judicial official’, who:
“(A) has been married to her for at least one year on the day of her death; or
“(B) is the father of issue by that marriage;
“(b) Every judicial official who files a written notification of his or her intention to come within the purview of this section, in accordance with paragraph (1) of subsection (a) of this section, shall be deemed thereby to consent and agree to having deducted and withheld from his or her salary, including any ‘retirement salary’, a sum equal to 4.5 percent of that salary. The amounts so deducted and withheld from the salary of each such judicial official shall, in accordance with such procedures as may be prescribed by the Comptroller General of the United States, be covered into the Treasury of the United States and credited to the ‘Judicial Survivors’ Annuities Fund’ established by
section 3 of the Judicial Survivors' Annuities Reform Act. Such fund shall be used for the payment of annuities, refunds, and allowances as provided by this section. Payment of such salary less such deductions shall be a full and complete discharge and acquittance of all claims and demands whatsoever for all services rendered by such judicial official during the period covered by such payment, except the rights to those benefits to which such judicial official, or his or her survivors, shall be entitled under the provisions of this section.

"(c) There shall also be deposited to the credit of the 'Judicial Survivors' Annuities Fund', in accordance with such procedures as may be prescribed by the Comptroller General of the United States, amounts matching those deducted and withheld in accordance with subsection (b) of this section. Such deposits shall be taken from the fund used to pay the compensation of the judicial official, and shall immediately become an integrated part of the 'Judicial Survivors' Annuities Fund' for any use required under this section.

"(d) Each judicial official shall deposit, with interest at 4 percent per annum to December 31, 1947, and at 3 percent per annum thereafter, compounded on December 31 of each year, to the credit of the 'Judicial Survivors' Annuities Fund':

1. a sum equal to 4.5 percent of that salary, including "retirement salary", which he or she has received for serving in any of the offices designated in paragraph (1) of subsection (a) of this section prior to the date upon which he or she filed notice of an intention to come within the purview of this section with the Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts; and

2. a sum equal to 4.5 percent of the basic salary, pay, or compensation which he or she has received for serving as a Senator, Representative, Delegate, or Resident Commissioner in Congress, or for serving as an 'employee', as that term is defined in subsection (1) of section 8331 of title 5, prior to assuming the responsibilities of any of the offices designated in paragraph (1) of subsection (a) of this section.

The interest otherwise required by this subsection shall not be required for any period during which a judicial official was separated from all such service and was not receiving any retirement salary.

"Each such judicial official may elect to make such deposits in installments, during the continuance of his or her service in those offices designated in paragraph (1) of subsection (a) of this section, in such amounts and under such conditions as may be determined in each instance by the Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts: Provided, That, in each instance in which a judicial official does elect to make such deposits in installments, the Director shall require (i) that the first installment payment made shall be in an amount no smaller than that amount necessary to cover at least the last eighteen months of prior creditable civilian service, and (ii) that at least one additional installment payment shall be made every eighteen months thereafter until the total of all such deposits have been made.

"Notwithstanding the failure of any such judicial official to make all such deposits or installment payments, credit shall be allowed for the service rendered, but the annuity of that judicial official's widow or widower shall be reduced by an amount equal to 10 percent of the amount of such deposits, computed as of the date of the death of such judicial official, unless such widow or widower shall elect to eliminate such service entirely from credit under subsection (k) of this section:
Provided, That no deposit shall be required from any such judicial official for any honorable active duty service in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard of the United States, or for any other creditable service rendered prior to August 1, 1920.

"(e) The amounts deducted and withheld in accordance with subsection (b) of this section, and the amounts deposited in accordance with subsection (d) of this section, shall be credited to individual accounts in the name of each judicial official from whom such amounts are received, for credit to the 'Judicial Survivors' Annuities Fund'.

"(f) The Secretary of the Treasury shall invest, from time to time, in interest bearing securities of the United States or Federal farm loan bonds, those portions of the 'Judicial Survivors' Annuities Fund' which in his judgment may not be immediately required for the payment of annuities, refunds, and allowances as provided in this section. The income derived from such investments shall constitute a part of such fund for the purposes of paying annuities and carrying out the provisions of subsections (g), (h), (m), (o), (p), and (q) of this section.

"(g) If any judicial official resigns from office without receiving any 'retirement salary,' all amounts credited to his or her individual account, together with interest at 4 percent per annum to December 31, 1947; and at 3 percent per annum thereafter, compounded on December 31 of each year, to the date of his or her relinquishment of office, shall be returned to that judicial official in a lump-sum payment within a reasonable period of time following the date of his or her relinquishment of office. For the purposes of this subsection a 'reasonable period of time' shall be presumed to be no longer than one year following the date upon which such judicial official relinquished his or her office.

"(h) Annuities payable under this section shall be paid only in accordance with the following provisions:

"(1) In any case in which a judicial official dies while in office, or while receiving 'retirement salary,' after having completed at least eighteen months of creditable civilian service, as computed in accordance with subsection (k) of this section, for the last eighteen months of which the salary deductions provided by subsection (b) of this section or, in lieu thereof, the deposits required by subsection (d) of this section have actually been made—

"(A) if such judicial official is survived by a widow or widower, but not by a child, there shall be paid to such widow or widower an annuity, beginning on the day on which such judicial official died, in an amount computed as provided in subsection (1) of this section; or

"(B) if such judicial official is survived by a widow or widower and a child or children, there shall be paid to such widow or widower an annuity, beginning on the day on which such judicial official died, in an amount computed as provided in subsection (1) of this section, and there shall also be paid to or on behalf of each such child an immediate annuity equal to:

"(i) $1,548: or

"(ii) $4,644, divided by the number of children; whichever is smallest; or

"(C) if such judicial official leaves no surviving widow or widower, but does leave a surviving child or children, there shall be paid to or on behalf of each such child an immediate annuity equal to:
“(i) the amount of the annuity to which the judicial official’s widow or widower would have been entitled under subparagraph (1)(A) of this subsection, had such widow or widower survived the judicial official, divided by the number of children; or

“(ii) $1,860; or

“(iii) $5,580, divided by the number of children; whichever is smallest.

“(2) An annuity payable to a widow or widower under subparagraphs (1)(A) or (1)(B) of this subsection shall be terminated upon his or her death or remarriage.

“(3) An annuity payable to a child under this subsection shall terminate:

“(A) if such child is receiving an annuity based upon his or her status under subparagraph (5)(A) of subsection (a) of this section, on the last day of the month during which he or she becomes eighteen years of age;

“(B) if such child is receiving an annuity based upon his or her status under subparagraph (5)(B) of subsection (a) of this section, either (i) on the first day of July immediately following his or her twenty-second birthday or (ii) on the last day of the month during which he or she ceases to be a full-time student in accordance with subparagraph (5)(B) of subsection (a) of this section, whichever occurs first: Provided, That if such child is rendered incapable of self-support because of a mental or physical disability incurred while receiving that annuity, that annuity shall not terminate, but shall continue without interruption and shall be deemed to have become, as of the date of disability, an annuity based upon his or her status under clause (ii) of subparagraph (5)(C) of subsection (a) of this section;

“(C) if such child is receiving an annuity based upon his or her status under subparagraph (5)(C) of subsection (a) of this section, on the last day of the month during which he or she ceases to be incapable of self-support because of mental or physical disability; or

“(D) on the last day of the month during which such child dies or marries.

“(4) An annuity payable to a child or children under subparagraph (1)(B) of this subsection shall be recomputed and paid as provided in subparagraph (1)(C) of this subsection upon the death, but not upon the remarriage, of the widow or widower who is receiving an annuity under subparagraph (1)(B) of this subsection.

“(5) In any case in which the annuity of a child is terminated, the annuity of each remaining child which is based upon the service of the same judicial official shall be recomputed and paid as though the child whose annuity has been terminated had not survived that judicial official.

“(i) All questions of dependency and disability arising under this section shall be determined by the Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts, subject to review only by the Judicial Conference of the United States, and the decision of the Judicial Conference of the United States shall be final and conclusive. The Director may order or direct at any time such medical or other examinations as he deems necessary to determine the facts relative to the nature and degree of disability of any child who is an annuitant, or an applicant for an annuity, under this section, and may suspend or
deny any such annuity for failure to submit to any such examination.

"(j) In any case in which a payment under this section is to be made to a minor, or to a person mentally incompetent or under other legal disability, as determined by a court of competent jurisdiction, such payment may be made to the person who is constituted guardian or other fiduciary of such claimant by the laws of the State of residence of such claimant, or to any other person who is otherwise legally vested with the care of the claimant or of the claimant's estate, and need not be made directly to such claimant. The Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts may, at his or her discretion, determine whether such payment is made directly to such claimant or to such guardian, fiduciary, or other person legally vested with the care of such claimant or the claimant's estate. Where no guardian or other fiduciary of such minor or such person under legal disability has been appointed under the laws of the State of residence of such claimant, the Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts shall determine the person who is otherwise legally vested with the care of the claimant or of the claimant's estate.

"(k) The years of service rendered by a judicial official which may be creditable in calculating the amount of an annuity for such judicial official's widow or widower under subsection (l) of this section shall include—

"(1) those years during which such judicial official served in any of the offices designated in paragraph (1) of subsection (a) of this section, including in the case of a Justice or judge of the United States those years during which he or she continued to hold office following retirement from regular active service under subsection (b) of section 371 or subsection (a) of section 372 of this title;

"(2) those years during which such judicial official served as a Senator, Representative, Delegate, or Resident Commissioner in Congress, prior to assuming the responsibilities of any of the offices designated in paragraph (1) of subsection (a) of this section;

"(3) those years during which such judicial official honorably served on active duty in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard of the United States, prior to assuming the responsibilities of any of the offices designated in paragraph (1) of subsection (a) of this section: Provided, That those years of such military service for which credit has been allowed for the purposes of retirement or retired pay under any other provision of law shall not be included as allowable years of such service under this section; and

"(4) those years during which such judicial official served as an 'employee', as that term is defined in subsection (1) of section 8331 of title 5, prior to assuming the responsibilities of any of the offices designated in paragraph (1) of subsection (a) of this section.

"Years." For the purposes of this subsection the term 'years' shall mean full years and twelfth parts thereof, excluding from the aggregate any fractional part of a month which numbers less than fifteen full days and including, as one full month, any fractional part of a month which numbers fifteen full days or more. Nothing in this subsection shall be interpreted as waiving or canceling that reduction in the annuity of a widow or widower which is required by subsection (d) of this section due to the failure of a judicial official to make those deposits required by subsection (d) of this section.

"(l) The annuity of a widow or widower of a judicial official shall be an amount equal to the sum of—
“(1) 1¼ percent of the average annual salary, including retirement salary, which such judicial official received for serving in any of the offices designated in paragraph (1) of subsection (a) of this section (i) during those three years of such service in which his or her annual salary was greatest, or (ii) if such judicial official has so served less than three years, but more than eighteen months, then during the total period of such service prior to his or her death, multiplied by the total of:

   (A) the number of years of creditable service tabulated in accordance with paragraph (1) of subsection (k) of this section; plus

   (B) the number of years of creditable service tabulated in accordance with paragraph (2) of subsection (k) of this section; plus

   (C) the number of years of creditable service tabulated in accordance with paragraph (3) of subsection (k) of this section; plus

   (D) the number of years up to, but not exceeding, fifteen of creditable service tabulated in accordance with paragraph (4) of subsection (k) of this section,

plus:

   (2) three-fourths of 1 percent of such average annual salary, multiplied by the number of years of any prior creditable service, as tabulated in accordance with subsection (k) of this section, not applied under paragraph (1) of this subsection:

Provided, That such annuity shall not exceed 40 percent of such average annual salary and shall be further reduced in accordance with subsection (d) of this section, if applicable.

“(m) Whenever the salary paid for service in one of the offices designated in paragraph (1) of subsection (a) of this section is increased, each annuity payable from the ‘Judicial Survivors’ Annuities Fund’, which is based, in whole or in part, upon a deceased judicial official having rendered some portion of his or her final eighteen months of service in that same office, shall also be increased. The actual amount of the increase in such an annuity shall be determined by multiplying the amount of the annuity, on the date on which the increase in salary becomes effective, by 3 percent for each 5 percent by which such salary has been increased. In the event that such salary is increased by less than 5 percent, there shall be no increase in such annuity.

“(n) Each annuity authorized under this section shall accrue monthly and shall be due and payable in monthly installments on the first business day of the month following the month or other period for which the annuity shall have accrued. No annuity authorized under this section shall be assignable, either in law or in equity, or subject to execution, levy, attachment, garnishment, or other legal process.

“(o) In any case in which a judicial official dies while in office, or

   (1) before having completed eighteen months of civilian service, computed in accordance with subsection (k) of this section, during which the salary deductions provided by subsection (b) of this section or the deposit required by subsection (d) of this section have actually been made; or

   (2) after having completed eighteen months of civilian service, computed in accordance with subsection (k) of this section, during which all such deductions or deposits have been made, but without a survivor or survivors who are entitled to receive the annuity benefits provided by subsection (h) of this section; or
“(3) the rights of all persons entitled to receive the annuity benefits provided by subsection (h) of this section terminate before a valid claim therefor has been established;

the total amount credited to the individual account of that judicial official, established under subsection (e) of this section, with interest at 4 percent per annum to December 31, 1947, and at 3 percent per annum thereafter, compounded on December 31 of each year, to the date of that judicial official's death, shall be paid, upon the establishment of a valid claim therefor, to the person or persons surviving at the date title to the payment arises, in the following order of precedence:

"First, to the beneficiary or beneficiaries whom that judicial official may have designated in a writing received by the Administrative Office of the United States Courts prior to his or her death;

"Second, if there be no such beneficiary, to the widow or widower of such judicial official;

"Third, if none of the above, to the child or children of such judicial official and the descendants of any deceased children by representation;

"Fourth, if none of the above, to the parents of such judicial official or the survivor of them;

"Fifth, if none of the above, to the duly appointed executor, executrix, administrator, or administratrix of the estate of such judicial official;

"Sixth, if none of the above, to such other next of kin of such judicial official, as may be determined by the Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts to be entitled to such payment, under the laws of the domicile of such judicial official, at the time of his or her death.

Such payment shall be a bar to recovery by any other person. For the purposes of this subsection only, a determination that an individual is a widow, widower, or child of a judicial official may be made by the Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts without regard to the definitions of those terms contained in paragraphs (3), (4), and (5) of subsection (a) of this section.

“(p) In any case in which all the annuities which are authorized by this section and based upon the service of a given official terminate before the aggregate amount of annuity payments received by the annuitant or annuitants equals the total amount credited to the individual account of such judicial official, established under subsection (e) of this section with interest at 4 percent per annum to December 31, 1947, and at 3 percent per annum thereafter, compounded on December 31 of each year, to the date of that judicial official's death, the difference between such total amount, with such interest, and such aggregate amount shall be paid, upon establishment of a valid claim therefor, in the order of precedence prescribed in subsection (o) of this section.

“(q) Any accrued annuity benefits remaining unpaid upon the termination of an annuity, other than by the death of an annuitant, shall be paid to that annuitant. Any accrued annuity benefits remaining unpaid upon the death of an annuitant shall be paid, upon the establishment of a valid claim therefor, in the following order of precedence:

"First, to the duly appointed executor, executrix, administrator, or administratrix of the estate of such annuitant;
Second, if there is no such executor, executrix, administrator, or administratrix, payments shall be made, after the expiration of sixty days from the date of death of such annuitant, to such individual or individuals as may appear, in the judgment of the Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts, to be legally entitled thereto, and such payment shall be a bar to recovery by any other individual.

"(r) Nothing contained in this section shall be interpreted to prevent a widow or widower eligible for an annuity under this section from simultaneously receiving such an annuity while also receiving any other annuity to which such widow or widower may also be entitled under any other law without regard to this section: Provided, That service used in the computation of the annuity conferred by this section shall not also be credited in computing any such other annuity."

Sec. 3. That on the date upon which this Act becomes effective there shall be established on the books of the Treasury a fund which shall be known as “The Judicial Survivors’ Annuities Fund”, and all money credited to the judicial survivors annuity fund established by section 2 of the Act of August 3, 1956 (70 Stat. 1021), as amended, shall be transferred to the credit of the Judicial Survivors’ Annuities Fund established by this section.

Sec. 4. That on the date upon which this Act becomes effective the Secretary of the Treasury shall ascertain from the Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts the amount of the actuarial deficiency in the fund transferred by section 3 of this Act on the date of that fund’s transfer and, at the earliest time thereafter at which appropriated funds in that amount shall become available, the Secretary shall deposit such funds, in a single payment, into the Judicial Survivors’ Annuities Fund established by section 3 of this Act. Such funds as are necessary to carry out this section are hereby authorized to be appropriated.

Sec. 5. That on the date upon which this Act becomes effective each annuity then being paid to a widow from the judicial survivors annuity fund established by section 2 of the Act of August 3, 1956 (70 Stat. 1021), as amended, shall be increased by an amount equal to one-fifth of 1 percent of the amount of such annuity multiplied by the number of months which have passed since the commencement of that annuity. For the purposes of this section, any fractional part of a month which numbers less than fifteen full days shall be excluded from the computation of the number of months and any fractional part of a month which numbers fifteen full days or more shall be included in the computation as one full month. Such funds as are necessary to carry out this section are authorized to be appropriated and, upon appropriation, shall be deposited by the Secretary of the Treasury, in a single payment, to credit of the Judicial Survivors’ Annuities Fund established by section 3 of this Act.

Sec. 6. That the benefits conferred by this Act shall, on the date upon which this Act becomes effective, immediately become available to any individual then receiving an annuity under section 2 of the Act of August 3, 1956 (70 Stat. 1021), as amended: Provided, That although the rights of any judicial official electing to come within the purview of section 376 of title 28, United States Code, on or after the date upon which this Act becomes effective, shall be determined exclusively under the provisions of that section as amended by this Act, nothing in this Act shall be interpreted to cancel, abrogate, or diminish any rights to which an individual or his or her survivors may be entitled by virtue of that individuals having contributed to the judicial survivors.
annuity fund established by section 2 of the Act of August 3, 1956 (70 Stat. 1021), as amended, before the date upon which this Act becomes effective.

Sec. 7. That, at any time within one hundred and eighty days after the date upon which this Act becomes effective, any judicial official who has, prior to that date, already participated in the judicial survivors annuity program created by the Act of August 3, 1956 (70 Stat. 1021), as amended, shall be entitled to revoke his or her earlier election to participate in that program and thereby completely withdraw from participation in the judicial survivors' annuities program created by this Act: Provided, That (a) any such revocation may be effected only by means of a writing filed with the Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts, (b) any such writing shall be deemed to have become effective no sooner than the date upon which that writing is received by the Director, (c) upon receipt of such a writing by the Director, any and all rights to survivorship benefits for such judicial official's survivors shall terminate, and all amounts credited to such judicial official's individual account, together with interest at 3 percent per annum, compounded on December 31 of each year to that date of revocation, shall thereafter be returned to that judicial official in a lump-sum refund payment, and (d) any judicial official who effects such a revocation and who subsequently again becomes eligible and elects to join the judicial survivors annuities program created by this Act under the provisions of section 376 of title 28, United States Code, as amended by this Act, shall be permitted to do so only upon the redeposit of the full amount of the refund obtained under this section plus interest at 3 percent per annum, compounded on December 31 of each year from the date of the revocation until the date upon which that amount is redeposited. Any judicial official who fails to effect a revocation in accordance with the right conferred by this section within one hundred and eighty days after the date upon which this Act becomes effective shall be deemed to have irrevocably waived the right to that revocation.

Effective date.

Sec. 8. That this Act shall become effective on the first day of the third month following the month in which it is enacted, or on October 1, 1976, whichever occurs last.

Approved October 19, 1976.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:

HOUSE REPORT No. 94-1604 (Comm. on the Judiciary).
SENATE REPORT No. 94-799 (Comm. on the Judiciary).
CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 122 (1976):
June 22, considered and passed Senate.
Sept. 29, considered and passed House, amended.
Oct. 1, Senate concurred in House amendments.