

BRIEFING PAPER

National Lobby of Parliament

Wednesday 22 October 2008

“Decent state pensions for all generations”

Theme

This event has been jointly organised between the NPC, TUC and the trade union movement in order to stress that the campaign for a decent state pension is an issue not just for today’s pensioners, but for future generations as well. We are therefore hoping that at least one pensioner and one worker from each constituency will see their MPs on the day.

Key demands

The lobby ties in with the State Pension Centenary campaign and as such, echoes the immediate demands for:

- The basic state pension to be raised above the poverty level (which was £134 a week, but has since been revised to £151 (for a single pensioner)
- The link with earnings or prices (whichever is higher) to be restored
- The state pension to be paid to all existing pensioners on a universal basis

March

The Greater London region of the National Pensioners Convention will stage a march, meeting at 11am at Whitehall Place (the road connecting Whitehall with Northumberland Avenue) and moving on to the Methodist Central Hall. Any trade union or pensioner groups that are able to bring banners and join the march are encouraged to do so.

Rally

At 12 noon, there will be a rally in the Methodist Central Hall, Westminster addressed by MPs, trade unionists, pensioner leaders and others. Owing to the large number of people expected to attend, two rooms have been set aside – The Library and Lecture Hall – and we hope to run two simultaneous rallies to encourage maximum attendance. The rallies are expected to close at around 2pm.

Lobby

Anytime from 1pm onwards, lobbyists can make their way over to the House of Commons to see their MPs. Those wishing to take part in the lobby should now write to their MPs at House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA asking if they will make themselves available on the day to be lobbied [see model letter attached].

If you do not know the name of your MP, they can be found by:

- Logging on to www.locata.co.uk
- Calling the House of Commons Information Office - 0207 219 4272

Getting into the House of Commons

At this stage, the entrance into the House of Commons is likely to be through a new purpose built visitors' entrance, situated near Carriage Gates towards the far left of the building. The final arrangements will be given out on the day.

Remember you will have to go through 'airport type' security to gain access to Parliament – on a busy day this can take at least 15 minutes – and you may need to queue until there is space. Owing to the limited space available in the House of Commons, MPs should arrange to meet lobbyists either in the Westminster Hall, Central Lobby or a private room/café.

Photographs are not permitted anywhere within the House of Commons; nor may banners or placards be taken into the building or left directly outside.

Whilst some refreshments are available within the House of Commons, lobbyists are advised to bring their own. Alternatively, lobbyists can also use the café in the Methodist Central Hall.

We will have a number of stewards available on the day. Any questions or enquiries should be directed to them. The smooth running of the lobby will rely on the co-operation of all involved. Thank you for your support.

Disabled access

If you are disabled, please telephone the Sergeant-at-Arms' office at the House of Commons, who will advise you of procedures for entering the building. (Phone 0207 219 3000 and ask the switchboard to put you through to the Sergeant's office). The Sergeant's office does allow some parking where it is required by disabled people, but individuals will need to verify this with the office. It is usual for one of your MPs' staff to accompany you once you enter the building. You will need to arrange this with your MP in advance.

Meeting your MP

When you meet your MP try to:

- Give them the relevant information they need about the issue you have
- Influence their views
- Persuade them that many other constituents share your concerns

- Ask them to pass on your concerns to the Government, and
- Ask them to take appropriate action to show that they support you

It is best to be as brief, clear and courteous as possible. If they send their researcher instead, treat them in the same way.

You should thank him or her for taking the time to see you, establish how much time they have, make two or three key points and - most importantly - ask them to follow up the meeting. Use the briefing notes provided to get across the key points.

9 Rules to follow when meeting your MP:

1. Be clear about the purpose of the meeting.
2. A Lobby visit is a conversation, don't give a lecture.
3. Stick to the basics.
4. Keep the conversation on track.
5. Don't lose your temper.
6. Get a commitment.
7. Don't be intimidated.
8. If you can't answer a question, don't try.
9. Remember to follow up.

Remember - do not be surprised if your MP only has a small amount of time to spare you. MPs will be very busy on the day, so don't take it personally. But make the most of the time you have with them.

Delegation to Number 10 Downing Street

We also hope to arrange for a joint NPC/TUC delegation to see the Prime Minister sometime during the day of the lobby to present our demands.

Supporting action

Those pensioner groups, trade union branches, trades councils or other groups not able to come to London on the day of the lobby are encouraged to organise some event in their local area on the same day at 12 noon. This could be a march or rally, demonstration, public meeting or some other activity. This action could help spread the message even further and encourage more people to get involved in the campaign.

Campaign materials

The NPC will be producing flyers, briefing notes and campaign stickers for those attending the lobby, long with newspapers and petitions for those holding events in their local areas. Please contact the NPC office to place an order.

Further information

For further information contact the NPC on 020-7553-6510 or email: info@@npcuk.org.

MODEL LETTER TO MPs

House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Date

Dear

National Lobby of Parliament on the State Pension Wednesday 22 October 2008

I am writing as one of your constituents to ask if you would make yourself available to be lobbied on the above mentioned date.

I would like to arrange to meet after [insert time] in either the Westminster Hall, Central Lobby or private meeting room, and wonder if you would be able to make some arrangements to that effect.

In the meantime, I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely