

Treasury to block DWP state pension changes - lawyer

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The Treasury will not allow the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to alter the proposals for raising the state pension age (SPA), a pensions lawyer said.

Last week, pensions minister Steve Webb said the DWP would "reflect" on its plans to increase the SPA to 66 by 2020, a proposal which puts the **retirement** of 500,000 women back by up to a year with little notice.

But Jennie Kreser, pensions partner at London law firm Silverman Sherliker (pictured), said the Treasury would not allow any changes to the proposals that would incur more complication or cost.

"The Treasury **computer** will say no," Kreser said.

Pressure is mounting on Webb to renege on the proposals. On **Wednesday**, Unions Together handed a 100,000-signature petition against the reform in to Parliament, and around 200 people protested against the reform in Westminster.

Within Parliament, opposition to the proposals is gaining ground. At last count, 159 MPs had signed an early day motion (EDM) opposing the SPA reforms, up from 140 last week.

Senior Liberal Democrats are understood to be planning a revolt on the issue, and shadow pensions minister although it is expected in early June.

Rachel Reeves has hinted of a Liberal backbench **rebellion** at the pensions bill's next reading.

The National Association of Pension Funds (NAPF) has also joined the call to slow reforms.

Chief executive Joanna Seagers said: "The current plans unfairly put women in their late 50s on a much faster path to a later retirement, leaving them little time to prepare.

"The government must protect this large group of women by giving them enough space to plan ahead, and it needs to revisit that aspect of the Pensions Bill."

However, Kreser said the Treasury will ignore calls to temper the reforms.

"If you pick a new date at which the SPA will rise, it will always be arbitrary and there will always be a cliff face.

"The only way the DWP might propose to change the reform is to create several staging dates for the SPA rise to smooth the effect, but it is unlikely to be accepted."

A date for the second reading of the pensions bill, which contains the proposals, has still not been set, although it is expected in early June.

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