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## Anger grows as changes hit women's pensions

**The row over women's state pensions is about to boil over again, with decisions looming that will impact on hundreds of thousands of women.**

**MyMoney24 writer ED FOSS reports.**

For those able to take a long term view - and it isn't easy - one fact seems certain: the state pension age in 30 years'- time is impossible to predict.

By 2041, judging by recent political behaviour, the age at which we can claim our state pension will have changed several times. And it will, it seems inevitable, continue to change further past that date, an unfortunate by-product of rising life expectancy. It remains to be determined how the state pension age for women will change in the next few years, but soon Parliament is to make a highly anticipated decision and give some short to medium-term certainty.

Bets are being laid, fairly reasonably; on the approaching third reading of the Pensions Bill finally carrying through the change which has been expected for some time now – that 'equalisation' will be achieved by 2018. Equalisation is where the state pension age for both men and women is the same, at 65 years old.

Achieving equalisation is already under way. Women can now retire at 60 years and seven months, although that is constantly increasing. That date of 2018 is two years earlier than stated in previous legislation and, alongside a further hike to 66 years old for both genders by 2020, has caused uproar amongst the women on who it impacts the most.

Born in the early to mid 1950s, they complain that they have not had time to plan and have been hit by two changes in their retirement dates.

Organisations like Age UK agree, and have long said increases to the state pension age need to make sure people

have enough time to plan change, with 10 years the minimum.

Hayley Tink, a chartered financial planner at independent financial advisers Almary Green, said: "It is the constant moving of the goalposts which seems unfair. "My own mother was born in November 1953 and while she was expecting to retire in July 2017 before these changes, now she has to wait until November 2018, a year and four months later. "This is on top of already being told a few years ago that she could not retire at 60 and would have to wait until 63 and seven months. From her point of view, it is simply unfair."

There appears to have been some partial good news on this score recently, with pensions minister Steve Webb saying: 'At the moment, pensions are often bad news for women and I'm determined as the minister to change that.'

He would not reveal what he and his colleagues would say to Parliament when the Pensions Bill comes up for its reading, but added: "The crucial thing for us is fairness." This fairness looks set to result in 'transitional' arrangements for those most affected. These, if they come to pass, will not solve all problems.

Ms Tink said easing tactics could include making changes to either pensions credit to provide a 'bridge' of income before the state pension age or possibly giving some sort of - tax savings, such as National Insurance rebates or Similar.

"I think it would have to be something outside the basic state pension system to save any 'egg on face' politically;" she added.'

At the same time, shadow pensions minister Rachel Reeves has put forward

an amendment to the Pensions Bill to try and drag the situation back to where it was before the 2018 equalisation proposal. The amendment would mean women would reach the 65-year-old state pension age by 2020 and both genders reach 66 between 2020 and 2022.

It remains to be seen if the tactic works, although cold water has already been poured on the idea from some quarters and it seems unlikely the government will want to be seen to be back-peddalling when the wider pensions situation is so obviously dire.