What You Can Do to Protect Your Retirement Benefits

Brenda Russell PhD
Professor Emerita, Physiology and Biophysics, College of Medicine, UIC
President of UIC-SUAA Chapter
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Russell@uic.edu

SUAA - State Universities Annuitants Association
UIC SUAA chapter
1,600 members
SUAA Illinois
15,600+ members

Mission of SUAA

• Provide the framework for a unified message dedicated to preserving and protecting a strong public pension system, healthcare benefits, and the general well-being of its membership.

• Advocates on behalf of all faculty and staff of public universities and community colleges - both retired and current employees - their spouses and survivors, who are participants and beneficiaries of the State Universities Retirement System.
Goals of UIC SUAA

- Keep you informed about your SURS pension and health insurance plans
- Influence legislators
- SUAA Legal action on pension “reform” law
- Have fun

SUAA Can Influence Illinois Legislature

- SUAA members are in Universities and Community Colleges throughout Illinois
- SUAA members live in most senate and representative districts
- SUAA has 16,000 voices and we do influence legislators and their staff

Why Illinois Pension “Reform”?  

- Fiscal mess from choices by politicians and voters
- Where was money found?
  - Pension fund used for operating expenses
  - Raised income tax to 5% in 2011
- How was less money spent?
  - ~25% down from 2000
  - Public services and education
  - Medicaid slashed in 2012
  - Pensions slashed in 2013

Center for Tax and Budget Accountability, Issue Brief: How Does Illinois Spending on Public Services Compare to Other States? (Chicago: January 20, 2010), 1.
**Pension Clause**

1970 Illinois Constitution

“Membership in any pension or retirement system of the state, any unit of local government or school district, or any agency or instrumentality thereof, shall be an enforceable contractual relationship, the benefits of which shall not be diminished or impaired.”

**1970 Illinois Constitution Protects Pensions**

- What does that mean?
- What is protected?
  a. Cut retiree health insurance
  b. Redefine / recalculate expected $$ during your working years
  c. Cut retiree Automatic Annual Increase, AAI (aka COLA)
  d. Cut monthly base of pension after retirement
  e. Etc.
- Answer: Legal challenge. SUAA et al., vs. SURS et al. now combined with other state employee pension plans (SERS, GARS, TRS)

**“Reform” Time Line**

- SB 1313, PA 97695. Free health insurance kept by Illinois Supreme Court in 2014.
- SB 1, PA 98599, Pension “reform”
- May/June 2015 expected ruling from Illinois Supreme Court
  - struck down altogether
  - uphold only portions of the bill

Unlike to cut pension after retirement (Gov. Rauner you’ve earned it.)
I hope no cut the COLA now 3% compounded annually
Maybe, redefine / recalculate expected $$ during your working years

I am not a lawyer and these are my own opinions not SUAA or SURS
SURS staff cannot comment on substantive aspects of pending litigation
Join SUAA

- Central SUAA office advocates for pension and benefits
- SUAA mini-briefings and website on retirement
- UIC SUAA chapter hosts a Spring meeting, Fall forum, newsletter, messages, legislative grass roots effort

What can you do?

- Join UIC chapter of SUUA for under $4/month
  - Join here today
  - Form at http://www.uic.edu/orgs/suua/applicat.html
  - Online at http://suaa.org/newmem.php

- Contribute to SUAA legal fund
  - http://suaa.org/ContributeToLegalFund.php
  - Goal to raise $500,000