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SUAA 2019 Legislative Platform

This legislative platform serves as a general guideline for SUAA's positions on legislation that affects pension, health insurance and other retirement benefits for SURS participants.

The main legislative goal for 2019 is to protect the retirement security of all past, present, and future employees of Illinois' public universities, community colleges and their survivors.

SUAA will review and evaluate all proposed initiatives and legislation relating to pensions, other retirement benefits, and the maintenance of a robust higher education system to determine their compatibility with the Association's goals; and, as appropriate, SUAA will publicly support or oppose such initiatives and legislation either in part or in their entirety.

If legislation is enacted that SUAA considers to be in violation of the pension protection clause of the Illinois Constitution, SUAA is prepared to challenge that legislation in the courts in concert with coalition partners or if necessary independently.

2019 Legislative Action Plan

SUAA supports legislation that would provide for guaranteed full funding of the SURS pension system.

SUAA opposes any legislative attempt to amend, modify or eliminate Article XII, Section 5 of the Illinois State Constitution which states *"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"*.

SUAA opposes legislation that does not provide for a compounded automatic annual increment that provides protection against inflation.

SUAA opposes legislation designed to eliminate the defined benefit option in State retirement plans for future employees.

SUAA supports legislation to revise Tier II pensions for a more equitable set of benefits related to final salary period, automatic annual increment, and early retirement reduction. SUAA will also closely monitor efforts to implement Tier III pensions.

SUAA opposes the 3% cap on earnings during the final four years of employment. SUAA supports increasing the cap from 3% to 6% as an interim improvement.

Revenue Enhancement Measures

It is SUAA's position that in order for the state to meet its current budget obligations, make full annual payments to the various pension systems and pay down the existing pension debt, the legislature will have to implement measures to increase state revenues and/or produce savings.

SUAA continues to support its proposal for using pension obligation bonds to fully or partially pay down the pension debt, but SUAA recognizes there are several other potentially viable options to address the pension debt. SUAA is open to support any of these options or package of options that, if implemented, will result in moving the state towards full funding of its pension systems.

A key condition for SUAA support of any pension related initiative or package of initiatives to increase state revenues or result in a savings to the state is that a portion of all resulting increases and/or savings must be dedicated to reducing the state's pension debt.

SUAA supports other revenue enhancement measures not directly related to pension debt that would address the state's continuing fiscal crisis. These measures include but are not limited to; the taxation of selected services, a speculation sales tax, and the elimination of some tax breaks such as the foreign dividend exemption, offshore oil drilling credit, and retail sales tax discount.

Health Insurance

SUAA supports legislation to ensure that all Illinois public university and community college employees, retiree and survivors will be treated equitably under the State Employees Health Plan and College Insurance Programs.

SUAA supports full funding for the College Insurance Plan, and SUAA opposes any reduction in coverage provided by that plan.

Federal Legislation

SUAA supports the repeal of the Social Security Windfall Elimination and Pension Offset.

Preserving the Quality of Higher Education

Recent trends and threats to the state's colleges and universities are of concern to the SUAA membership.

SUAA opposes legislation to reduce or eliminate the fifty percent (50%) tuition waivers for the children of current employees at state universities.

SUAA opposes legislation to "reform" higher education by establishing "Centers of Excellence," setting uniform university admission requirements, eliminating programs/majors, severely limiting programmatic expansion and changing the Illinois Board of Higher Education to be a governing body.

SUAA opposes the consolidation of the Illinois Board of Higher Education, the Illinois Community College Board and the Illinois Student Assistance Commission with all their rights, powers, duties and functions to be transferred to the IBHE.

SUAA opposes prohibition of nonessential expenses for FY 2019, 2020, and 2021 which includes all promotion and advertising and travel expenses.

SUAA opposes legislation that would create a three year teaching degree.