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ILLINOIS STATE SENATE
MICHAEL FRERICHS
STATE SENATOR • 52ND DISTRICT

May 4, 2009

Dear Governor Quinn,

The pension system alterations proposed in your fiscal year 2010 budget are of great concern to me and the constituents I represent. I agree with you that our state is in dire need of revenue enhancements to bolster our depleted pension fund, but I do not believe that this can be accomplished by forcing an undeserved financial burden on public service professionals who serve our state.

For decades, the General Assembly and previous Executive administrations have failed to adequately fund our pension systems. I fear your proposal is more of the same. Using this money for purposes other than pension contributions is the cause of our current financial demise. The inability of state government to be fiscally responsible does not warrant the proposed changes you are advancing. Responsible public employees have upheld their end of the deal and consistently met their obligations to contribute to the pension system. It is time that Illinois lawmakers live up to the same standard of integrity.

We cannot afford any more "pension holidays" in Illinois. With the nation's highest unfunded pension liability of over \$70 billion, it is absurd to think that this dilemma will go away on its own. It is unacceptable for this problem to be passed along to our children through continued irresponsibility of state government. We have made a promise to the professionals who make our state work. Our constitution requires that it be fulfilled.

Those who have devoted their lives to the service of the people of Illinois should not be expected to contribute more than the average citizen. The benefits associated with our public employee pensions are modest in comparison to other states despite our employees paying some of the highest contribution rates in the nation. It is unreasonable to ask them to pay more for fewer benefits.

I ask that you examine the effect your proposal will have on attracting new employees to our state. Providing a modest pension system with higher contribution rates will surely deter quality candidates from seeking employment. Why would they choose to start a career and raise a family in Illinois when our neighboring states will provide better benefits at a lower cost?

I am willing to consider adjustments to help ease our unfunded pension obligation, but I find the proposals you have put forth to be unrealistic and unacceptable. I cannot support such measures.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael Frerichs".

State Senator Mike Frerichs