

Northern Illinois SUAA Regional Meetings—April, 2010

The 2010 N.I.SUAA Regional Conferences (“Surviving the Illinois Fiscal Crisis”) were hosted by Moraine Valley C.C. on April 8, and by Harper College on April 9. Over 230 SUAA members attended the conferences. CDAA had 14 members in attendance.

Speakers included Bukola Bello, Director of Illinois Retirement Security Initiative; Mitch Vogel, SURS Board of Directors; Dick Lockhart, SUAA Lobbyist; and Linda Brookhart, SUAA Executive Director. The focus of the presentations included what is happening relative to current and future retiree benefits, what could happen relative to our benefits, and what actions are necessary to preserve our current benefits.

Per what is happening—for new employees (those hired after January 1, 2011), the Illinois legislature passed Senate Bill 1946 on March 24, 2010. The Bill will effectively drastically reduce retiree and survivor benefits; drastically reduce the cost of living adjustment benefit; and require employees to work to age 67 to receive a “penalty” free pension. Unfortunately, these draconian measures will do nothing to reduce the Illinois \$13 billion budget debt or over \$80 billion unfunded pension obligation.

Per what may happen—for current employees—increase current SURS 8% contribution to between 11 and 13%; reduction of cost of living adjustment benefit; and possibly implement a reduced benefit retirement system for future years of service. For current retirees—there has been much discussion, including several editorials by *The Chicago Tribune*, questioning the Illinois Constitutional protection of retiree benefits, in particular, the annual 3% cost of living adjustment. The other measure that would drastically reduce retiree pensions would be the implementation of state income tax on retirement earnings.

For current and future retirees, the College Insurance Plan faces a potential financial implosion.

Per what actions we can take to preserve current and future benefits—two strategies were delineated as most effective and expedient in proactively advocating our position(s). One, increase chapter membership (a larger membership helps to provide the association with additional support resources and greater credibility with politicians.) Two, become actively involved in the political process by contacting and lobbying (provide useful information) every Illinois legislator (as well as current legislator challengers.)

The feedback from the regional meeting attendees was very positive. CDAA has already begun to address the “actions we can take.”