

Posted: 17 March 2010

TO: ALL CDAA/SUAA Members

RE: Urgent Benefit Information

FROM: Steve Mansfield, President

DATE: March 16, 2010

We need your help. In fact, we need everyone to help. The State's budget crisis is going to result in dire consequences for nearly every citizen of Illinois. I'm sure you know what is happening with State's funding or should I say "lack of funding" of your local schools as well as all Illinois public community colleges and universities. COD has been forced to curtail/reduce funding for programs as well as downsize faculty and classified positions. Smaller community colleges in southern Illinois are facing financial exigency that may result in closing the schools. The State is several months in arrears in reimbursing health care providers, doctors and hospitals, throughout Illinois for services covered by CIP and State Health Insurance plans.

Few could have anticipated the rapidity of the escalating financial crisis confronting the taxpayers of Illinois. Unfortunately, the financial crisis is further exacerbated by the unfunded \$80+ billion debt to the pension systems. Several organizations/associations and newspapers have targeted reducing the benefits of current and future pensioners as a means of ameliorating the crisis. Current discussions in Springfield include requiring retirees to pay income taxes on their pensions along with having their COLA reduced or eliminated. Additional proposals include requiring current and future employees to contribute more to their pensions while at the same time reducing their retirement benefits.

Without severe budget cuts and subsequent reduction of funding for services and support at the state and local levels along with a concomitant influx of revenue, there may be a dour outlook for current and future retiree benefits. There is an imminent danger that legislative reforms to public employee pension and health benefit systems could be enacted within the next two months. These measures would probably be irrevocable.

What can we do? We have to share our perspectives and opposition to unwarranted reduction of retiree benefits with our State representatives and senators. Sharing can be done face-to-face, by telephone, and/or through letter writing or email communication. We have to share our message. The coalitions, organizations, and newspapers that believe pensioners are overpaid and under taxed are sharing their messages with your legislators.

We should be involved in developing a solution for the State's fiscal crisis---We should not be identified as the problem.

### **Start Today**

- Register and attend "The Illinois Fiscal Crisis" Regional meeting on April 8 or April 9
- Volunteer to become a CDAA Legislative Contact Person
- Go to [suaa.org](http://suaa.org) website and register for "Call to Action"
- Check [suaa.org](http://suaa.org) website often and review "Latest News"
- Act/React to emails/snail mail sent to you by SUAA and CDAA
- Check [codretirees.org](http://codretirees.org) websites for updates and announcements
- Be sure to support SUAAction (even more so for those of you residing outside of Illinois)
- Inform current and future retiree non-CDAA members as to why they should be members