

Legislative Report of the Second Vice President - William Peterman

The Second Vice President (legislative) monitors State level legislative activity, especially activity pertaining to pensions, health care benefits, and higher education in general, to keep members informed about issues affecting them.

The legislative session just concluded paid little attention to pensions and health care for State employees. With the help from Covid-related federal dollars, Governor Pritzker has put forward budgets that are not only balanced but have included additional payments into the various pension funds above the amount required by the State's debt-repayment schedule (the Edgar ramp).

The budget just passed by the legislature is balanced, but just barely. It continues to add \$200 million for pension "prepayment." It also includes an additional \$100 million for the MAP (Monetary Award Program) and \$2.8 billion for university and college infrastructure.

"Pension reform" as an issue continues to lurk in the background. It is likely to become an item for discussion in the coming year as it becomes harder for the Governor to balance the budget. On the positive side, discussions are taking place regarding improvements to the Tier II program. Senator Martwick appears to be taking the lead here. Any improvements to Tier II will mean additional costs, and any serious proposal will no doubt be resisted by many lawmakers, civic organizations, and a portion of the press.

There continue to be calls for "pension reform" by several organizations, including the Chicago Tribune, the Illinois Policy Institute, and other mostly conservative groups. It is unclear what "reforms" could accomplish since Tier II benefits currently barely meet the Safe Harbor provisions of Social Security. Calls for "reform" will most likely increase during the next legislative session.

SUAA and your UIC chapter will continue to monitor any legislative action that might affect the membership. We continue to explore ways of keeping our membership informed. Please let us know if you have questions or concerns about your pension or health benefits. We also hope you will be interested and able to assist us in communicating with State legislators. Together we can work to ensure the continuation of our well-deserved pensions and health care benefits.