**Legislative Action Report**

By Dick Simpson

Since the last Board meeting, we have created a nine-person committee to coordinate our legislative activities during 2024. Other volunteers are still welcome, and we will begin our work with a training session/committee meeting in January. The legislative session begins in January, and we will begin meeting with legislators as their schedule allows, given that most of them are also up for reelection.

We are coordinating with **Thomas Martin**, Program Coordinator for SUAA, whose email address is Thomas@SUAA.org, and whose phone is the office number, 217-523-4040.

Those like **Ashish Sen,** who attended a legislative fundraiser in Evanston or my own attendance at the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability event, should send their invitations to Thomas who will pay for the event directly. The committee so far is **Dick Simpson, Arlene Norsym, Michele Thompson, Marty Gartzman, Karen Egerer, Lawrence Kloc, Marilyn Ruiz**, and one or two additional volunteers. At the Board meeting, we will discuss a Legislative committee meeting on February 16 at 10 a.m. Thomas or our new Executive Director, Bryan Soady, will attend. Thomas is supplying a list of our members by legislative district to help organize our meetings with legislators.

We will form delegations of from 2-5 members to meet with legislators **by Zoom** as these are easier to arrange and to get participation by our members. These will be primarily listening tours to hear their legislative priorities and to let them know our concerns.

Our State legislative agenda is as follows:

1. Generally, in our legislative meetings, we will stress protection of Tier 1 pensions, better healthcare for members (many hospitals don’t accept TRAIL, and more may begin to turn it down), and improvements for Tier 2; *e.*g. to lower the time necessary to be vested.
2. SUAAction will provide information on the number of our members in each legislative district. We may provide that information to individual legislators when we meet with them.
3. We will stress that the State funding problem is not due to pensions but because the State refused to fund pensions for a decade.
4. We oppose a constitutional convention or constitutional amendment to strip us of our pension rights. There will be a vote by the electorate in 2028 to determine whether to hold a convention, and it is not too soon to press our position on this.

Because this is an election year, we do not expect major negative pension legislation to pass but we must be ready if it is introduced.

The University of Illinois’ federal lobbying agenda for 2024, which we support, is:

1. Passage of a new Farm Bill. The current one, which funds both agriculture and key food assistance programs, is set to expire in September.
2. Federal spending, especially Pell Grants and Research Funding for Universities, such as NFS and NEH.
3. Higher Education Act reauthorization.
4. Renewing international partnerships with other universities around the world.

As mentioned in the previous reports, I had a phone meeting with **Marissa Brewer**, Advocacy Coordinator for Illinois Connection, who also serves on the SUAA-UIUC Executive Committee. We agreed that Illinois Connection and SUAA should work closely together.

1. Their Lobby Day in Springfield will be April 16, and some of our members should participate.
2. They have shared with us their lobbying instructions for meetings in-district with State legislators. I will revise those for our members’ meetings with legislators.
3. Our members will join in their legislative lobbying, and we will let them know about our meetings with legislators.
4. Marissa will help set up a Zoom meeting between a small delegation of our Board and the Board leadership of SUAA-UIUC so we can coordinate our efforts.
5. Marissa will share with us the profile that Illinois Connection has created for each legislator.

If we are to protect our pensions, we must overcome our falling membership numbers and a similar falling membership in SUAAction.