

Brothers and sisters,

As you know, since last November when the legislature tried to jam pension and retiree health care reform down our throats, we have been working very hard to try and limit them to reasonable changes.

Since February, we have been a part of the Governor's Responsible Retirement Reform For Local Government task force. This task force was created to determine what pension and retiree health care reforms are truly needed, taking into consideration input from all stakeholders. The group was made up of Labor unions, financial experts, actuaries and municipal leaders. After months of exhaustive work, a plan was created. The final product was a compromise in which not everyone was happy with everything in it however, the majority of the task force members believed it will work and so do we.

Now that the task force plan is public, the legislature has been attempting to introduce pension and retiree health care bills. The problem is that the draft bills we have seen, far exceed what the task force plan called for, essentially taking the minority view and moving that forward. Most of the areas in which the draft exceeds the plan involve the elimination our collective bargaining rights, something we won't stand for.

To date, NO bills have been introduced, but we anticipate there will be as soon as the legislature returns from their Thanksgiving break. We have only seen drafts, which are all bad. We have tried to work with the legislators to bring it back in line with the task force report but to date, have not had any success. I normally don't like to lobby an issue without bills to reference, but in this case waiting is too risky.

We are hearing rumors that have been substantiated and are very concerning. Currently, we have heard that the House, Senate and the Governor have cut a deal to move a pension and retiree health care bill. We have not been given the "agreed upon" draft but we understand it goes well beyond the task force plan. I believe it will be almost identical to the drafts we have seen over the last couple weeks. **Those drafts all gave the state of Michigan the ability to come in and impose benefit cuts to new hires, active employees and even current retirees!!**

We are facing the 2017 fight all over again. We believe they will be introducing the bills on November 28th as soon as they come back from break and will attempt to jam this through as fast as possible with little public input.

We need EVERYONE to [contact their state representative and senator](#) and use

the following talking points. [Please call, email and try to make any coffee hours](#) that they may host back in your district over the next two weeks while they are on break. We need them to hear from you before they return to Lansing. We also need you to contact them more than once and recruit others to do the same.

1. Tell them how important your pension and retiree health care is to you and your family.
 - a. How it protects you and your family if you get hurt or killed in the line of duty.
 - b. How most firefighters do not get social security.
 - c. Average retirement age of a firefighter is early 50's which leaves a 10-15 year gap before we can go on Medicare.
2. Tell them what changes you have made with your city or township to help them with the costs. For example, 2 tier pension system, elimination of defined benefit retiree health care, DC retirement plans, wage cuts, etc. Show them that your community IS doing what it needs to do and the state does not need to help. A "one size fits all" law will only hurt your communities.
3. Tell them to stick to the task force plan and give it a chance to work. This was a long, well thought through process, by experts and stakeholders and should be given a chance to work. Tell them that you do NOT support ANYTHING beyond the task force plan.
4. Lastly talk about all of the problems we are having with recruitment and retention of firefighters currently. These changes will only make it worse.

Please forward this information to every public worker you know, particularly any current retirees that may not be on email lists. This has the potential to affect every public worker or retiree in Michigan.

Also just like last year, we are in the planning stages for another Fire and Police rally at the capitol. We don't know the day yet, but it will either be the last week in November or first week in December. Last year we had a very successful rally and we may need to do that again. If we need the rally, please make every effort to come. Our strength is in our numbers.

Thank you for all you do to support your brothers and sister firefighters and our families.

STAND STRONG!!

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