



***Retirement Security for Illinois Educators***  
**Teachers' Retirement System of the State of Illinois**

2815 West Washington Street, P.O. Box 19253

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September 10, 2010

Decatur Herald & Review

[gary.sawyer@lee.net](mailto:gary.sawyer@lee.net)

To the Editor:

The Herald & Review's recent editorial bemoaning state government's chronic underfunding of state pension systems – in particular teacher pensions – did a good job of outlining the problem facing the Teachers' Retirement System, but misstated the core reasons for this problem.

Your editorial criticizes "overly generous" pension benefits for retired teachers as one of the key reasons TRS is underfunded. The reality is that 60 percent of retired teachers in Illinois receive an annual pension from TRS that is less than \$60,000. The average teacher pension is \$43,000. The average length of service of a retired teacher is 27 years on the job.

By any measure, a pension of under \$60,000 per year after more than 20 years of service in a classroom cannot be considered "overly generous." This is especially true when one considers that Illinois public school teachers do not pay into Social Security and do not receive it for their service in the classroom.

TRS pensions are very important to everyone in Macon County and the State of Illinois. Pensions are not just numbers in a ledger. The total economic impact of TRS pensions in Illinois during 2009 was \$4 billion. Statewide, TRS pensions created more than 30,000 jobs with a payroll of \$1 billion. In Macon County alone, TRS pensions and benefits paid out in 2009 equaled a \$31 million stimulus for the local economy.

The truth is pensions for retired educators allow teachers to continue to help their communities grow even after they have left the classroom.

Sincerely,

Dave Urbanek  
Public Information Officer  
Teachers' Retirement System of the State of Illinois



## Teachers' Retirement System of the State of Illinois

2815 West Washington Street | P.O. Box 19253 | Springfield, Illinois 62794-9253

Richard W. Ingram, Executive Director

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July 13, 2011

Letters to the Editor  
Decatur Herald & Review  
601 East Williams Street  
Decatur, Illinois 62523-1142

To the Editor:

Your July 7 editorial, "State's pension issue is too big to ignore," tells your readers that while the state budget is "being cut elsewhere, the pension system is walking away with nearly 20 percent of the state's budget."

This unfortunate phrase makes it sound like 20 percent of the state's budget is being squirreled away by some faceless bureaucracy that provides no benefit to the state's citizens.

In reality, the state's pension systems annually deliver an invaluable service to the state. More than 174,000 seniors in Illinois receive a state pension that allows them to continue making important contributions to their communities, as well as their local economies.

The average pension for a retired member of Teachers' Retirement System, the largest state pension fund, is \$42,782 – not extravagant in today's economy, particularly when you consider Illinois teachers do not participate in Social Security. Their pensions allow senior citizens to continue to patronize local grocery and department stores, drycleaners, gas stations and other businesses. Their pensions allow them to volunteer their services in the community and to contribute to many worthy causes.

In Macon County alone, there are more than 1,028 TRS benefit recipients who receive approximately \$31 million per year. That's an average pension of \$30,554, money that is spent locally every day. Statewide in 2009, TRS pensions created a \$4 billion economic stimulus that created and supported more than 30,000 jobs with a payroll of more than \$1 billion.

As state leaders continue to discuss the future of Illinois' pension systems, it is vitally important to remember that taxpayer money dedicated to pensions recycles back through the Illinois economy and does not just disappear. Pensions are essential lifelines for many important members of the community.

Sincerely,

Dick Ingram  
Executive Director  
Teachers' Retirement System of the State of Illinois



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January 15, 2013

Letter to the Editor  
Decatur Herald & Review  
601 East William Street  
Decatur, Illinois 62523-1142  
[gary.sawyer@lee.net](mailto:gary.sawyer@lee.net)

To the Editor:

In a recent column in the Herald & Review, Gary Sawyer was discussing the relative flexibility of various clauses in both the United States and Illinois constitutions. His point was that the language in both documents, especially controversial provisions, has been open to interpretation since the beginning of the Republic and has been deciphered repeatedly by the courts.

But in referring to Article XIII, Section 5 of the Illinois Constitution – the “pension protection clause” – Mr. Sawyer said, “The pension portion of the Illinois Constitution has not been tested in court, so the answer isn’t clear.”

In reality, Article XIII, Section 5 has been tested in court – seven times since 1970. In each decision, the language of Section 5 has been interpreted by the court to mean that pension benefits of teachers and public employees cannot be “diminished or impaired.”

Here are the court decisions:

*Kuhlman v. Bd. Of Tr. Of Police Pension Fund of Maywood*, 106 Ill. App. 3<sup>rd</sup> 603, 606 (1<sup>st</sup> Dist. 1982); *Felt v. Bd. Of Tr. Of Judges Ret. Sys.*, 107 Ill. 2<sup>nd</sup> 158, 162 (1985); *Cote v. Village of Broadview*, No. 08C 6615, 2009 WL 2475117 at \*(N.D. Illi. Aug. 11, 2009); *Gualano V. City of Des Plaines*, 139 Ill. App. 3<sup>rd</sup> 456, 458 (1<sup>st</sup> Dist. 1985); *Taft v. Bd. Of Tr. Of Police Pension Fund of Winthrop Harbor*, 133 Ill. App. 3<sup>rd</sup> 566, 571 (2<sup>nd</sup> Dist. 1985); *Kraus v. Bd. Of Tr. Of Police Pension Fund of Niles*, 72 Ill. App. 3<sup>rd</sup> 833, 849 (1<sup>st</sup> Dist. 1979); *Miller v. Retirement Board of Policemen’s Annuity*, 329 Ill. App. 3<sup>rd</sup> 589, 594 (1<sup>st</sup> Dist. 2002).

It is entirely possible that the courts may evaluate any future case brought before them in a new light and reach new conclusions. But any new evaluation would run up against an existing court record that is considerable.

Sincerely,

Dick Ingram  
Executive Director  
Teachers’ Retirement System