



SAY NO TO UNNECESSARY PENSION ENHANCEMENTS

HB4099 (Kifowit), HB4334 (Cabello), HB 5211 (Kifowit), HB4336 (Cabello), SB3453 (Martwick)

There are multiple public safety pension enhancement bills working their way through the legislative process this year, looking for a problem to solve. While there may be safe harbor issues with some of the state's tier 2 pension plans, that plan does not exist for downstate police and fire funds. When the state passed pension consolidation, Public Act (P.A.) 101-0610, changes were made to ensure that those funds would meet the minimum safe harbor provisions. Specifically the following adjustments were made;

Final Average Salary

The Act provides that the final average salary for a retired police officer or firefighter shall be the greater of (i) the average monthly salary obtained by dividing the total salary of the employee during the highest 48 consecutive months of service within the last 60 months of employment; or (ii) the average monthly salary obtained by dividing the total salary of the employee during the highest 96 consecutive months of service within the last 120 months of employment. *

Pensionable Salary Cap

The Act provides that the pensionable salary cap (set in 2011 at \$106,800) shall annually be increased by the lesser of (i) 3% of the pensionable salary cap, or (ii) the annual unadjusted percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index-Urban (CPI-U) for the previous 12 months. This differs from previous statute, which capped the growth rate of the pensionable salary from the lesser of ½ CPI-U or 3%. The pensionable salary cap effective in 2024 is \$138,093.50. State law requires the Illinois Department of Insurance to annually calculate the maximum annual salary for annuity purposes no later than November 1 of each year and to make the results of those calculations available to the boards of trustees of retirement systems and funds established under the Illinois Pension Code. *

Unnecessary enhancements to the downstate public safety pensions will undo years of gains made by local governments to fully fund their pensions. Leaving tier 2 pensions alone will allow municipalities to continue to provide reasonable and financially stable retirements for our employees.

*IML Fact Sheet Consolidation of Downstate Public Safety Pension Assets, 01-18-2024

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TRANSIT FISCAL CLIFF AHEAD ~PROCEED WITH CAUTION~

Transit agencies in Northeastern Illinois are facing an estimated \$730 million operating budget shortfall beginning in 2026 due to changes in travel behavior following the COVID-19 pandemic and expiration of federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) emergency assistance funds. In 2022, the Illinois General Assembly tasked the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) with identifying options regarding funding and governance for the Chicago region's transit system, Public Act 102-1028.

CMAP considered the findings of the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) strategic plan, Transit is the Answer, and CMAP's Mobility Recovery project; conducted multiple discussions at various levels from riders to system administrators and boards; and developed an in-depth analysis of three question areas: the system we want, how to pay for it, and how to implement that vision. CMAP completed its' analysis and final report in the last half of October 2023 and submitted the report to the General Assembly for review and consideration during the 2024 Legislative Session.

WCGL supports efforts to strengthen the region's transit system and believes that transit is crucial to addressing the region's goals of improving mobility, increasing economic development and competitiveness, combating climate change, and building a more equitable region. To achieve those goals. WCGL supports a combination of new revenue options in the form of: System Generated Revenues, Baseline Actions and Durable Sources, as well as Transformational Investment and Meaningful Change, all outlined in the PART report. The WCGL does so recognizing new revenue options as necessary to maintaining the region's transit system and making visionary, targeted improvements and investments for the future.

WCGL's positions is that any new revenue generated from residents of Will County be largely directed to service improvements in areas of Will County currently unserved or underserved by transit. We oppose the integration of the RTA board and associated service boards (CTA, METRA and PACE) into one single regional transit agency governance unit. Instead, we support keeping the current transit governance structure with the unique service boards and strengthening of the RTA. Furthermore, WCGL opposes any changes made to regional board appointments that would dilute the voices of suburban residents who today feel underrepresented in regional transit decision-making. Instead, we support increased local government representation from collar counties. Finally, we urge that regardless of the governance structure, funding allocation policy remain largely consistent with current policy and that a super majority vote be required to pass any budget or funding for any City or suburban program or project.

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Preserve the State Collected Grocery Tax

We urge the members of the General Assembly to support their municipalities by not eliminating the state collected grocery tax. Each year municipalities urge the legislature to enhance local revenues, and in the last several years the general assembly and the governor have done just that, via gaming, cannabis, and modest increases to LGDF. As much as those increases have been welcomed they don't begin to cover the costs of operating a local government today.

The Governor's goal of reducing the tax burden on residents, particularly our most vulnerable, is an admirable goal, but eliminating the grocery tax is not going to provide any meaningful relief. The savings to a resident amount to less than \$0.52 per week. That small amount of savings to a resident in no way offsets the impacts it is going to have to the communities that depend on the grocery tax. In Will and Grundy Counties there are communities looking at facing as much a \$3.5 million loss in revenue from the ending of the grocery tax. Those dollars will need to come from somewhere. Additionally, many communities use the grocery tax as an incentive to bring a grocery store to their community. Eliminating the tax will take one more economic development tool away from local governments at a time when they need all the tools available to them to attract retailers.

The dollar amounts may look less for our smaller communities but the impacts are even greater. As of our smaller communities said it best, *"I am in that sweet spot where I think I get to oversee a town with rural characteristics and suburban growth promise. I am assuming a majority of towns throughout the State rely on the staple of 'grocery tax' for its sales tax. For instance, the local grocer generates \$120,000 of the annual \$750,000 in sales tax our community receives each year. I think it is safe to say, cumulatively, there are far more smaller municipalities with frozen downtowns that only derive revenue from the essential staples that are purchased within their municipal boundaries, i.e. the Dollar General and the Casey's tax."*

We ask again, DO NOT ELIMINATE THE GROCERY TAX.

Bolingbrook - \$1,750,000	Coal City - \$80,000	Joliet - \$3,000,000	Lemont - \$500,000
Lockport - \$1,000,000	Mokena - \$850,000	Monee \$100,000	Morris - \$1,500,000
Naperville - \$3,500,000	Orland Park - \$2,500,000	Peotone - \$160,000	Romeoville - \$900,000
Shorewood - \$500,000	Wilmington - \$72,000		

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Keep Our Neighborhoods Safe Support Crime Free Housing Initiatives

HB5314 (Ford) - HB5432 (Gong-Gershowitz) - SB3680 (Villa)

Over 160 communities in Illinois utilize crime free housing ordinances including several WCGL members. Our municipalities believe that this is an essential tool for keeping their residents safe. These bills would eliminate current programs that are working in the vast majority of communities with crime free housing ordinances. If these bills pass as written; municipalities would lose the ability penalize landlords, tenants or others for excessive nuisance calls; landlords could no longer evict or penalize tenants for a criminal conviction or unlawful conduct; background checks would no longer be allowed for prospective and current tenants.

Give Us a Hand Support Non-Home Rule Lift Assist Regulation and Fees

HB2216 (Kelly) - SB1731 (Anderson)

Currently only home rule municipalities have the authority to impose fees on congregate care facilities for lift assist calls. These facilities are transferring their liability on to local governments by using local first responders almost like on-call staff. Allowing local governments to charge a fee for these services can serve as a deterrent to facilities calling out first responders for these non-emergency events. Additionally, they allow the local government to offset some of their costs for these calls.

Too Close for Comfort Support Renewable Energy Siting Regulations

HB4135 (DeLuca)

This bill would allow for increased setbacks on solar and wind projects. As a result of PA 102-1123, many communities on the outskirts of the Chicagoland area have been dealing with large scale renewable energy projects wanting to locate just beyond municipal borders. These are some of the highest growth communities in the state and these developments do not fit with the character or goals of these communities. Planning for future development and infrastructure needs is a difficult task but taking large tracts of available property out of the mix for decades to come can make that task nearly impossible. HB4135 will give Counties one more tool when regulating these developments.

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A Costly Presumption Oppose COVID Presumption

HB4321 (Kelly)

Representative Kelly's bill creates a presumption that any first responder who has become disabled as a result of COVID-19 contracted it as a result of line of duty exposure. There is no reasonable way to determine where the individual contracted the COVID-19 infection. With no reliable way to make that determination it should not be assumed it occurred at work. This is another costly enhancement to already generous disability benefits system.

Return of a Larger Share Support a Restoration of LGDF

HB4455 (DeLuca)

Restoring LGDF will reduce pressure on property taxes and other revenue sources, especially in small and non-home rule communities. To make up for LGDF losses since 2011, municipalities and counties have been forced to consider tough decisions such as cutting services, laying off personnel or raising property taxes, which are already among the highest in the nation. Additional funding could be used to improve the safety and quality of life for residents throughout Illinois -- all without raising your local property taxes. The best way to ensure stability in the services residents rely on is for Illinois lawmakers to restore LGDF funding to the agreed-upon 10 percent rate.

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