

Teacher Pension -- TALKING POINTS!!

What do I say to my legislator -- Written - Email - Phone - Face to Face -- about My Pension?

- Tell your story! Tell your legislator about ‘the profession’ of teaching. Tell him/her about the children YOU teach/taught – the challenges and the joys. Tell him/her why you stayed in the profession!
- Create your own story -- speak from **the heart** – in YOUR voice! Proofread the letter, but speak in your voice! YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BE A PENSION EXPERT! Your legislator is NOT a pension expert!
- Tell your legislator what schools/districts you taught/teach in. Make sure to sign any correspondence and give your address -- otherwise it's a wasted effort. Your legislator needs to know that you live in his/her district and that you are a voter.
- If you phone, a short message is best. If you develop your story, write a long letter a bit later! There is no minimum or maximum length. Our goal is to put a human face on the teachers that each legislator represents. We need legislators to see that pensions are affecting real people's lives!

Here are some points you can make:

- We played by the rules. (Teachers ALWAYS play by the rules!) We paid into the system and did everything that was expected. Rules should not get changed in the middle of the game. Cuts in our benefits and cuts in current teachers' pensions are wrong, immoral and unconstitutional!
- We have done nothing wrong. **Quite simply, it was the state that did not live up to its responsibility!** We followed the rules laid out by our state retirement system .
- Classroom teacher pensions are not lavish – the average is \$43,000. For every high pension story the media can cite there are a dozen stories of teachers who retired on minimum salaries 30 years ago, with no Medicare and no Social Security – some are even using food pantries to survive. **DO NOT ACCEPT THE ARGUMENT THAT TEACHER PENSIONS ARE LAVISH!** Be respectful but firm, even adamant, that this is simply not the case! Ask them to help us counter the LIES! Ask them to work WITH the IEA to support teachers!
- **Teachers are good citizens. We are registered to vote. We vote, our families vote, and we encourage others to vote. Other citizens often ask our opinions because we are teachers. This pension issue is a “game changer”**

for us! If a legislator cannot support teachers and our pensions with the help of the IEA, then we will work hard to defeat that legislator!

- It is unconstitutional to unilaterally change our pensions in mid-stream. Our pensions are protected by the constitution of the state of Illinois! Some reports in the media recently have contended that this is not the case, and they are simply wrong. Here is an analysis of pensions by Illinois Senate President Cullerton's chief lawyer to which you can refer your legislator.

<http://www.illinoisenatedemocrats.com/index.php/component/content/article/108-public-information-brochures/1517-pension-debate>

- **For further background information, check this link – it is excellent!**
<http://www.ieanea.org/media/Myths-and-Facts-About-Our-State-Funded-Pensions-2010.pdf>