

Pension Fairness *for Illinois Communities*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Margarite Wypychowski, (office) 312-335-0100
(cell) 773-458-8961

Holly Dotterer, (office) 312-335-0100
(cell) 773-727-3296

Illinois Voters Urge General Assembly to Act on Public Safety Pension Reform to Relieve Local Taxpayers

Voters strongly support immediate legislative action to curb rising public safety pension costs

CHICAGO [November 3, 2010] – Voters in communities across Illinois expressed overwhelming support for the immediate implementation of meaningful reforms to public safety pension systems in Tuesday’s election. Legislative action is urgently needed to rein in on escalating pension obligations for public safety employees, which are mandated by the state government and put significant strain on municipal and taxpayer budgets. The General Assembly enacted comprehensive pension reform for all public employees last March; however, police and fire pensions were excluded from the legislation, meaning that Illinois taxpayers continue to shoulder the brunt of those pension costs, which are escalating out of control in many communities across the state.

In nearly all of the communities in which the referendum appeared on election ballots, more than 80 percent of voters responded “Yes,” to an advisory referendum asking constituents if the General Assembly and Governor should take immediate steps to protect taxpayers from the burden of police and fire pension costs through meaningful pension reform. The referendum appeared on election ballots in 45 communities across the state and follows the passage of similar pension reforms for all other public employees last spring.

“This sends a clear signal to state legislators that there is strong demand for public safety pension reform. Right now, taxpayers are paying more to retired workers than they can afford to pay to current employees to keep their communities safe. This has to change,” said Roger Huebner, Deputy Executive Director and General Counsel of the Illinois Municipal League. “The Pension Fairness for Illinois Communities Coalition is calling on lawmakers to

address their constituents' concerns and make police and fire pension reform a top legislative priority in the November veto session," Huebner said.

As it currently stands, the pension payout structure for public safety employees is financially unsustainable for taxpayers. Public safety employees can retire as early as age 50 after 30 years of service, with a pension of 75 percent of their final pay rate despite only contributing one-third of the cost of their pension. For instance, **a public safety employee who has contributed roughly \$300,000 to his or her pension over a 30-year career, can feasibly draw almost \$7.5 million in pension benefits over a 30-year retirement.**

"Skyrocketing police and fire pension obligations passed down by the state are crippling our communities," said Burr Ridge Mayor Gary Grasso. "The current system is simply unsustainable and actually threatens public safety. It diverts precious dollars to pensions and drains the budgets for existing police and fire services. Taxpayers can no longer foot this bill, especially at a time when many don't have money to put into their own retirement funds as they struggle with unemployment, foreclosures, mortgages and rising property taxes. The General Assembly needs to finish the job and reform pensions for public safety employees during the upcoming veto session," he said.

The Pension Fairness for Illinois Communities coalition, which represents more than 200 communities, was established as a statewide effort to develop a lasting solution to the pension crisis that protects Illinois taxpayers and communities, while ensuring sustainable retirement benefits for public safety employees.

####

For more information, please visit: www.pensionfairness.org

Pension Fairness *for Illinois Communities*

Public Safety Pension Reform Ballot Referendum Results

Percentage of votes in favor of public safety pension reform in 45 Illinois communities:

(44 of the 45 total referenda results were available as of 4:30pm CST, November 3, 2010)

Community	YES Vote	Community	YES Vote
Addison	83%	Lombard	84%
Bloomingtondale	86%	Lyons	80%
Brookfield	79%	Montgomery	81%
Burr Ridge	89%	Naperville	83%
Carpentersville	85%	Norridge	84%
Cary	82%	Oak Brook	88%
Countryside	81%	Orland Park	81%
DeKalb	76%	Oswego	80%
Downers Grove	83%	Palos Park	82%
Fox Lake		Prospect Heights	80%
Glendale Heights	84%	Roselle	84%
Grayslake	84%	Round Lake	85%
Gurnee	83%	Round Lake Beach	81%
Highland Park	89%	St. Charles	79%
Island Lake*	85%	South Holland	88%
LaGrange	86%	Stickney	81%
LaGrange Park	83%	Vernon Hills	85%
Lake Bluff	89%	Warrenville	83%
Lake Zurich	82%	Wayne	85%
Lindenhurst	83%	West Dundee	83%
Lisle	86%	Westmont	84%
Lockport	73%	Willowbrook	85%
		Woodridge	84%

*Island Lake, Lake County result shown above. Island Lake, McHenry County Yes Vote was 82%