

A Few minutes with the Boss

By: Joseph Andalina

No respite

No, none at all. This business of labor is a tough one all by itself. When you add in pension issues, it is even more time consuming for our MAP board.

All unions are going through the dilemmas of layoffs, versus concessions, arbitrating new contracts with our expectations of some wage increases and then there is the ever constant vigil of ensuring officers' rights in alleged misconduct violations.

Add to these issues now is pensions and your government's never-ending battle plan to take them away from you. Police officers on an individual basis are waking up to the dire threat against their retirement—and they should. Look what our political types have done to the teachers in this state.

A pension system that would work properly if the state and some local governments only funded the system the way they are mandated to. We wouldn't even be talking here. But not making things simple is never the politicians' way. A system that worked and could have been tweaked over time fell into the hands of a "scared" general assembly who decided to "fix" the pension problem to alter the time, age, and amounts of their pensions in just one day.

That still absolutely amazes me.

In one day they changed a teacher's retirement age from 55 to 67, extended the time frame, and capping their payouts, no matter how long they will have worked to a low six-figure level. Most teachers won't get anywhere near that figure. That's only for the big boys and girls in the system.

The problem for us in law enforcement is not their pensions, but ours. How will this change our pensions? Are our beloved political hacks, I mean representatives, going to do this to cops, too?

You betcha!

If they get the chance, instead of like in the Godfather when Don Corleone says "look how they massacred my boy" you will be saying "look how they massacred my pension." Do you think it's wise, that a cop starting at age 21 must work until he/she is 67? My Lord, what a joke! That's 47 years in that squad car, driving up and down your favorite thoroughfare. Hopefully you will be able to rotate beats. How about the same sergeant following you around for over 40 years to make sure you do your business checks? How awful. The thought of this is just nuts. I don't really think they want 67-year old cops on the force, so when they come up with a doable number, watch out!

Well, it won't affect you all currently employed, they say. Oh yeah. I don't believe them. How will this help save any pension money now? (It will when the cops drop dead of heart attacks—then they won't have to pay the pension money because it is rumored that they will decrease survivor benefits, too. Maybe that's their secret plan...)

Estimates are that the real savings won't start until 2045 for teachers. Same will apply for cops. So does anybody not think that these sneaky people in Springfield may not try to alter your pensions in a few years by hook or by crook? Or by changing the contributions?

The press and the public have jumped on the politicians because of Illinois' dreary budget outlook, debt, and corruption. So our jittery representatives and senators decide to screw up the teachers' pensions—in one day.

You are next. New people only for now, but be ever so vigilant for changes in the future to our existing pensions for those currently employed in various agencies. Keep in mind, the Big Powerful Teachers' Union was powerless to stop this abomination. It flew under their radar. It's harder to change us now, as most local government plans are not as underfunded as the state and teachers' pension affected by the new law.

However, your mayor and other local politicians are chomping at the bit to save money on cops' pensions to utilize it for other pork barrel projects.

While MAP and other unions are working together on various round table panels, these politicians will do what is expedient for them and to hell with the public employees. All of a sudden, our noble profession is meaningless because they think that some copper with a \$40,000 pension after 25 years and living in purgatory all that time is one stressful situation after another is loving the "vida loca."

Give me a break. But as I've said before, you—the individual police officer—must get involved now.

Call, write, or e-mail your representative in Springfield and demand that they listen to you and keep our retirement as is. Your involvement with all the police organizers out there can go a long way together to resolve this attack on our pensions. They need to see it from you. From the grunt on the street patrolling on midnights to Officers Friendly, and the guy in the bureau to **all** the chevrons, no matter what rank—get involved.

Vita E'bella

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