

A Few minutes with the Boss

By: Joseph Andalina

Mayors looking out for cops

Do you believe that? Could that even be remotely possible? Or are you as cynical as I when it comes to something any mayors might say?

It's been our history that you use extreme caution when you give any credibility to a mayor(s) dissertation on anything related to a cop's job. Remember, as mayors, they join the Illinois Municipal Mayors' League, which is not only anti-cop, but anti-labor. The two are tied together. While they for the most part don't want you to die or anything like that, they do wish your wages, ability to arbitrate, and your collective bargaining rights would die like in Wisconsin or Indiana.

They really want you to have no say in your working environment unless, of course, you are willing to be their chauffer, empty their waste baskets, and carry their water, or in common parlance, kiss their keister. We have a few of those already in this business that make the rest of us persona-non-grata's shake our collective heads.

But I digress.

In a recent *Herald News* article titled **Du Page Mayor: Make cops, firefighters part of pension reform**, some of these mayors once again spew out the same old pabulum that rising pension costs are putting a financial strain on local budgets. Municipal leaders in Du Page (and you can read mayors every time you hear or read municipal leaders) want Illinois legislators to expand pension reform to **all** cops and firefighters and not just state employees. Well, we all knew that was going to happen, as I've been writing about for over a year.

These mayors have finally realized that lawmakers do not want to mess up their opportunities to get re-elected this year by maiming our pensions. They also may not want to violate the essence of our Illinois Constitution, which is admirable for those politicians who have managed to sustain their integrity during this vicious fight.

But the mayors say this is a "critical" issue and they want pension benefits reduced to stabilize their budgets and prevent the pension system from collapsing. Nice of them to say that, since they are the biggest single reason (for not making their payment obligations) for pensions to be underfunded in some areas.

And while Governor Quinn signed legislation limiting benefits for new hires, as well as raising the age to retire to 55, these mayors argue that this does not affect police or firefighters who are already working or retired. One sees this as an attack on both categories, doesn't it? Would they screw with retired cops? I wouldn't bet against it.

Then they spit out that communities are "on the verge of insolvency." But they don't say what communities, nor give any evidence of this insolvency.

Just the same old tired soundbites that the press, who carries their water, repeats ad-nauseum. So the mayor of Burr Ridge actually says in the article that the money for pensions isn't going to be there for the good cops and fire people in our communities.

He offers the proof that in 1999, the Burr Ridge pension system was 110% funded and now it's only 68%, even though the Village contributes four times more money annually. He states that is the definition of "unsustainability." (The buzzword of our second decade in the new millennium—it's a load of crap to make a gullible public worried and for the politicians to retain their popularity.)

I don't know if this is true or if the village actually pays their "fair share" of contributions on time because the newspaper prints no proof on the subject. So besides some municipalities not paying their fair share, could it be that the decrease now of pensions being underfunded is also caused by the economy, by poor investments by the village or pension boards? Is it unreasonable to believe that if your 401k has tanked, so have many other villages' investments? Paper loss only in many instances.

Could the poor economy be the barometer of some of this problem? Does it come down to poor management or investment strategies? Just asking here. But isn't it nice that these mayors are so worried about us receiving a pension that they want our pension to be legislated away for a reduction of benefits so they don't have to contribute? How very, very sweet of them. At the end of the day it will be them and their bs that will result in a copper's reduced pension.

It will take more than they just claiming that the sky is falling for me and many other unions and pension groups as well as cops to believe them. We have seen this before. So now they say that they will go to Springfield at least once a month to push for reform. I guess to ensure that at the end of the day we really won't have a pension! One feels that they are really not looking out for us with this "end of the day" baloney.

I say you need to contact your reps once a month to push for the opposite. So as the mayors wish to press their points, you/we must do the same.

It's your future. Don't let "municipalities" take it away.

Vita é Bella