

A Few Minutes with the Boss

By: Joe Andalina

For those who may doubt...

Earlier this month, I sent out notices to all MAP chapter liaisons to post at their departments. The two-page information packet contained an introduction on the Illinois General Assembly and their notion to take a hatchet job to municipal and county pensions. It also contained a recent opinion piece posted on this website.

We want you to know that all of you coppers on a local level are not immune to the political desire to create havoc in your retirement fund, just like they did to state employees and teachers. But some do not believe. They doubt and ask why the politicians would do this to them?

Short answer: because they can and they got away with it on the state level. And local mayors and their ilk have been pushing to demonize their employees, too. And they know the press, state and local civic groups, and most of the population is on board to screw you, too. They are feeling powerful and they want it to happen.

It's sad because from what I've learned from pension groups is that our local pension funds are in way better shape than the state's. But it doesn't matter because the politicians see an opportunity.

Y'all know that politician who said to never let a crisis go to waste, don't you? Well, that's what the mayor's league see here—a chance to use a crisis on the state level and get under from their own failure to pay also. But the thing is again; our pensions are not in crisis. The stock market and other investments have recaptured and actually gained the losses from the market correction of a couple of years ago.

But never mind that, the politicians say—let's ignore the truth and just spin bull crap once again. A local opinion piece, in the *Daily Herald* on February 6, 2014, bears out the desire to “re-examine” local pensions.

They complain about annual pension bumps for retired county employees. But it doesn't report what employees. It's doubtful that these are the “grunts” who got bumps, most likely the higher-ups. I've been retired for 15 years and have never received a bump, except for my constitutionally mandated COLA increase. Nor do I know of any copper receiving these outlandish bumps. But it's a good story because someone must have gotten it and they use that as an excuse to disparage all of our pensions.

Here's the proof. They editorialize that: “It all adds up to one more example of how Illinois' patchwork approach to public pension is in desperate need of a comprehensive re-examination.”

Further, they state that “Realistically that examination won't — and perhaps can't — take place until the emerging crisis in local public safety employees' pension is addressed, but take place it surely must.”

Local, people. Read it again. Local means you in your nice suburban PD. They go on to say that there is an untenable budget outlook for many suburban public safety pensions.

It goes on and on. Look for the editorial. Someone is getting bonuses, but it isn't you or me. However, why is it always so bad to take care of your retired folks? They are jealous in the press, one can surmise. But the point is that the press will be for local pension reform, and the game is just starting.

So while I doubt that this will take place because it is an election year, be forewarned. It is coming. I expect next year's legislation will be introduced in the House.

Then the Senate president will come up with a compromise bill. And they will dicker and deal until Mike Madigan starts throwing his ball at the hoop and eventually after months, or a year, a bill will pass with Madigan's fingerprints all over it. Sound familiar?

So be alert and ask your politicians how they feel about this. It's got to come from you. You, after all, VOTE! And that's what they will respond to.

Stay safe, and *vita é Bella*.