

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 11, 2015

### **CONTACT**

Bill Looby, Illinois AFL-CIO at 217-492-2612 – BillL@ilafl-cio.org

Anders Lindall, AFSCME at 312-641-6060 – ALindall@afscme31.org

Charlie McBarron, IEA at 217-685-6444 – Charlie.McBarron@ieanea.org

Aviva Bowen, IFT at 773-350-1869 – abowen@ift-aft.org

## **Workers and retirees urge IL Supreme Court to uphold trial court decision, declare pension theft unconstitutional**

Springfield - Attorneys representing active employees and retirees participating in the state pension systems today urged the justices of the Illinois Supreme Court to uphold a Circuit Court decision declaring Senate Bill 1 (SB1, Public Act 98-599) unconstitutional and void.

During today's hearing, attorneys for the plaintiffs argued that the state constitution's Pension Protection Clause means what it says: that membership in the state pension systems constitutes "...an enforceable contractual relationship, the benefits of which shall not be diminished or impaired."

Following the hearing, Illinois AFL-CIO President Michael T. Carrigan, speaking for the We Are One Illinois union coalition, said the 2013 pension law was both unconstitutional and grossly unfair.

"Over a lifetime of service, active and retired workers contributed to their pensions faithfully out of every paycheck," Carrigan said. "Most of these public servants don't qualify for Social Security, so their modest pensions are their life savings. Make no mistake: We're here today due to the failure of politicians to pay the state's share. Workers and retirees shouldn't be punished for a problem they didn't create.

"The framers of our constitution knew this day could come, when politicians might seek to avoid keeping their promises, opting instead to deny teachers, first responders, nurses, and other public employees and retirees their promised retirement. That's why they made the language in the Illinois Constitution crystal clear," Carrigan added. "Instead of honoring their responsibility, politicians would force public servants alone to rectify the failure to adequately fund the pension systems in the first place. That's unfair and unconstitutional, so we seek justice today from our state's highest court."

SB 1 reduces the value of pension benefits by one-third or more over 20 years in retirement by slashing cost-of-living adjustments and making other unfair, unconstitutional cuts to the pensions of working and retired members of the Teachers' Retirement System, State Employees' Retirement System, and State Universities Retirement System. The average pension benefit in these systems is approximately \$32,000 a year.

###

*We Are One Illinois Coalition members include the Illinois AFL-CIO; Illinois Federation of Teachers; Illinois Education Association; American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Council 31; Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 73; Illinois Fraternal Order of Police State Lodge; Illinois Police Benevolent and Protective Association; Associated Fire Fighters of Illinois; Illinois Nurses Association; Laborers' International Union of North America Local 2002; Teamsters Local 700; and Teamsters Joint Council 25.*