

2015 SUAA-UIUC Legislative Position Statement

The 99th General Assembly has begun its 2015 Spring Session and the Governor gave his State of the State address on February 4 and presented his FY 2015-16 budget on February 18. Clearly the major issue confronting both the Governor and Lawmakers is restoring the State's financial stability. It is likely a variety of proposals will be considered that will address the State's fiscal situation through a combination of spending cuts and new revenues.

This legislative session includes a first-time Governor who is new to elected office and from a different political party than both the President of the Senate and Speaker of the House. This session includes the immediate need to replace revenue foregone when the Income Tax rate was reduced on January 1. It includes a severe, long-term structural budget deficit (one in which recurring programs require more revenue than recurring sources produce) and a growing stack of unpaid bills left over from prior years. It also includes major policy issues such as an increase in the minimum wage, reform or restructuring of Medicaid, and many other substantive policy issues; and of course it includes a momentous decision by the State Supreme Court on pension law. In response, several lawsuits were filed on behalf of public and university employees and retirees, asserting that the retirement provisions recently enacted in PA 98-599 violate the non-impairment clause of the state constitution. On May 8, 2015, the Illinois Supreme Court ruled PA 98-599 unconstitutional in its entirety. Nevertheless, even before that ruling was announced, additional pension reform legislation had already been introduced, as were proposals to alter the Constitution to remove the non-impairment clause.

Any one of these issues would be cause for uncertainty in anticipating what might happen. Taken together, these factors make this session perhaps the most unpredictable one in memory. We urge you to watch the SUAA web site (www.suaa.org) regularly for updates on these and all other issues that will affect us. Below you will find UIUC-SUAA's legislative position statement for the current session. The statement outlines the principles on which our legislative actions will be based. Along with the statewide SUAA office we will monitor these closely and continue to work hard on your behalf to ensure your well-earned benefits are protected.