

Survey Results

SUAA - University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Chapter

April 28, 2019

SUAA-UIUC is the local chapter of the State Universities Association (SUAA) for the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. We are an organization advocating for current and future annuitants in the State Universities Retirement System.

In our current state fiscal climate, there is much discussion about funding for state retirement and other benefits and its impact on our state budget. Nearly every day there are comments or suggestions in the various media about how to deal with these concerns and during this session, the General Assembly will certainly consider various actions related to them. This indeed a fluid and evolving situation that warrants careful and thoughtful watch. Since our primary responsibility is to protect and advocate for current and future annuitants, we felt it was critical to not just “assume” we understood how you feel about these issues, but to actually “know” how our constituents feel about them. To help us better understand how you feel about related issues, we decided to conduct a survey to give us a clearer indication of your thoughts on important issues.

Our hope was to not only hear from current members of our Chapter, but other retirees and more importantly current employees (future retirees). As you can see from the Methodology statement below, we are extremely pleased that respondents were nicely split between current members and non-SUAA members. THANKS to all of you who took the time to respond, this is VERY important to us!!

Methodology

Of the 1819 SUAA-UIUC members in good standing as of February 10, 1280 had valid email addresses on file and were emailed an invitation to take the online survey on Wednesday, February 20, 2019. In addition, an invitation to take the survey was issued to all current UIUC employees via the weekly newsletter E-week on Friday February 22 and also to attendees at the Pre-Retirement Conference on Saturday, March 2. The survey was built using UIUC’s WebTools and hosted on the UIUC website. The survey was anonymous; no identifying information was requested or recorded. All questions were optional and the survey taker was free to move back and forward through the questions. The survey was available through March 5. 540 responses were recorded; 274 respondents identified themselves as SUAA members, which represents approximately a 21% response rate from the SUAA members with valid emails. A more precise response rate is not possible because we cannot know how many employees and SUAA members read the E-week notice.

Analysis

Here is a summary of some of your responses:

- 52% support taxing the pensions of higher income individuals
- 47% are in favor of raising the personal income tax
- 64% support eliminating some personal and corporate income tax breaks
- 76 % support a graduated income tax

- 51% support adjusting the annual pension increase from a fixed 3% to a percentage based on the cost of living

It is important to underscore areas of opposition:

- 71% oppose increasing the personal share of health insurance costs
- 88% oppose decreasing the scope and breadth of health insurance coverage

From the responses it is clear that current and future annuitants are concerned about the security of their pensions and also about the quality of future health benefits. Many of you also provided comments that were very helpful.

Attached is a spreadsheet that summarizes your responses.

Again, thank you for your participation!

summary

SUAA - UIUC 2019 Survey – Preliminary Results

Total submissions: 540

Attitudes	Strongly disagree	Some-what disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
1. I'm confident that my SURS pension is secure	19%	28%	11%	33%	5%	4%
2. I'm confident that my healthcare costs will be manageable throughout retirement	20%	32%	14%	24%	4%	6%
3. I'm worried about the State's ability to meet pension obligations	5%	3%	4%	18%	69%	1%
4. I believe beneficiaries of the State pension systems should share more of the cost of their pensions.	38%	19%	17%	14%	6%	6%
5. I believe the taxpayers of Illinois should bear the employer cost of funding State pensions.	13%	15%	20%	24%	23%	5%
6. I believe that state universities should be responsible for the employer share of the cost of the pensions (including benefits) of their employees.	8%	11%	18%	35%	23%	5%

Priorities	Average rank	% ranking this #1
7. Rank 1 to 5 where 1 is the most important priority		
Maintain pensions (including benefits) for current annuitants	2.2	41%
Maintain pensions (including benefits) for current employees	3.2	9%
Maintain health benefits and costs for all SURS participants	3.2	8%
Ensure the State funds the pension system adequately	2.5	28%
Ensure a strong higher education system in Illinois	3.9	14%

Solutions	Strongly oppose	Some-what oppose	Neither oppose nor support	Some-what support	Strongly support	Don't know
8. Increase State personal income tax rate (currently 4.95%)	21%	16%	15%	30%	17%	1%
9. Increase State corporate tax rate (currently 5.25%)	9%	10%	12%	29%	39%	1%
10. Approve a graduated income tax so that higher earners have a higher tax rate.	11%	7%	6%	21%	55%	1%
11. Increase the State part of the sales tax (currently 6.25%)	17%	22%	22%	25%	10%	4%
12. Tax additional services and goods	12%	16%	24%	29%	15%	4%
13. Eliminate some personal and corporate income tax breaks	8%	11%	15%	34%	30%	3%
14. Tax pensions and Social Security income of higher income recipients (currently not taxed in Illinois)	25%	13%	8%	30%	22%	2%
15. Shift pension obligations from the State to educational institutions	21%	23%	21%	27%	5%	4%
16. Adjust formula for annual pension increases from a fixed 3% to a percent based on cost of living	19%	15%	13%	28%	21%	3%
17. Increase annuitant (pensioner) share of health costs	43%	27%	10%	16%	3%	1%
18. Decrease the scope and breadth of health insurance coverage	64%	22%	6%	6%	1%	1%

summary

Demographics

	Yes	No	Don't know
19. Are you currently employed at a state university in Illinois?	52%	48%	
21. Are you currently receiving an annuity payment (pension) or disability payment from your work at a state university in Illinois?	47%	53%	
22. Are you currently receiving a survivor annuity payment (pension) from your spouse's work at a state university in Illinois?	4%	96%	
23. Are you currently a resident of the State of Illinois?	88%	12%	
24. Are you currently a voter in the State of Illinois?	86%	14%	
25. Are you currently a member of SUAA?	51%	21%	29%

20. Which, if any, SURS retirement tier are you in?	
Tier 1 (hired before 2011, in a defined benefit plan)	81%
Tier 2 (hired after 2010, in a defined benefit plan)	8%
Self-managed plan	11%
Not in a SURS retirement plan	1%

26. Are you currently receiving Social Security or do you expect to receive it in the future?	
Yes, currently receiving Social Security	25%
Not currently receiving Social Security, but I expect to receive it in the future	33%
Not currently receiving Social Security and do not expect to receive it in the future	40%
Not sure	2%

27. Your age	
Under 30	1%
30-45	17%
46-60	27%
61-70	24%
Over 70	31%