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The Annuitant

A publication of the UIUC Chapter
State Universities Annuitants Association

Spring 2016

Pam Cler, Editor

A Tribute to Gerald Brighton

H. F. Williamson

Gerald Brighton, a long-time member of the Executive Committee of the UIUC Chapter of the State Universities Annuitants Association (SUAA) passed away on February 13, 2016.

Gerry started at the University of Illinois as a student graduating with honors in accounting in 1941. After serving in the Army Air Corps, he returned to earn his M.S. and Ph.D. in accounting. He joined the accounting faculty and served for over 40 years retiring in 1988 as the Ernst and Whinney Distinguished Professor of Accountancy. He received many awards for his teaching and research activities. He was also active on campus serving in the Faculty Senate and on a number of Senate committees; on the Athletic Board; the University YMCA Board of Directors, and the Advisory Board to the SURS Board of Trustees.

We knew him best as a colleague on the Chapter's Executive Committee. He was asked to serve as Chapter Treasurer in 1995 when his predecessor moved to another community. The next year he was elected to the first of his two three-year terms as an Executive Committee member. Though his elected terms ended in 2002, he agreed to continue as Treasurer. In that position, he served nearly 20 years as a mentor and friend to the over 50 individuals who served with him on the Committee in that period. As our current President Barbara Hartman notes, he was an "intelligent, thoughtful, and compassionate colleague." Current Treasurer Ron Webbink said that he was not surprised that "Gerry could not have made the transfer of his treasurer's duties to me more comfortable. I will miss his positive outlook and sense of humor."

We salute Gerry Brighton for a life well lived and contributions made.

Spring Chapter Meeting Features UI President Killeen

Steve Rugg

The 2016 spring meeting of the SUAA-UIUC Chapter will be held on **Sunday, April 24, 1:30 p.m., at the I-Hotel and Conference Center**, First Street and St. Mary's Road in Champaign. The meeting will begin with social time at 1:30 p.m. with the formal meeting starting at 2:00 p.m.

University of Illinois **President Timothy Killeen** will be the featured speaker. He will offer observations and comments on his experiences during his first full year as UI President. While many UI Presidents have faced challenges soon after taking office, none has confronted quite the mix of fiscal and political tests that have emerged during President Killeen's early tenure.

SUAA statewide Executive Director Linda Brookhart will also address the meeting to bring us up to date on legislative and other issues facing SUAA members.

In addition four new candidates for the UIUC-SUAA Executive Committee will be presented for election. Biographies for these candidates can be found on page 3 in this newsletter.

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
SUAA-UIUC CHAPTER
2015-16**

** designates elected positions*

~ OFFICERS ~

President

Barbara Hartman*

Vice President

Terri Palumbo* - *Membership*

Secretary

Jane Loeb* - *Communications*

Treasurer

Ron Webbink*

~ OTHER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ~

Pam Cler* - *Newsletter*

Thomas Conry*

Robert Rich* - *Legislative*

Stephen Rugg* - *Legislative, Programs*

Terry Ruprecht* - *Past Pres, Membership*

Rick Schoell* - *Legislative*

Ginny Waaler* - *Programs*

H. F. (Bill) Williamson* - *Benefits*

~ OTHER COMMITTEES ~

Mary Beastall - *Benefits*

Gary Engelgau - *Website*

Helen Satterthwaite - *Legislative*

~ LIAISONS ~

Athalia Hunt - *Campus*

Helen Satterthwaite - *Clark-Lindsey*

~ STATE SUAA LEADERSHIP ~

H. F. (Bill) Williamson* - *Foundation*

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Inside Illinois Online Subscription

Just a reminder that *Inside Illinois* is no longer offered in print version. The online version includes the same quality news, research articles and photographs.

If you subscribe to the online version, an email will be sent each Thursday highlighting the week's headlines and provide you a link to the issue. Go to <https://illinois.edu/gm/subscribe/7330> and complete the requested information.

Check your Vehicle Registration!!

The State of Illinois is no longer sending courtesy reminder notices for vehicle registration, a cost-saving decision made in light of the ongoing budget impasse in Springfield.

Registrations expired for more than 30 days will be assessed a \$20 late renewal fine. But, legislation was introduced in February to suspend the fines until the state has a budget.

You may sign up for email reminders online. Provide your Registration ID and PIN from your current vehicle registration card. If you do not have the card, call the Public Inquiry Division at 800-252-8980 to obtain those numbers. Then sign up at: <http://www.ilsos.gov/greenmail/>.

NOTE: An inquiry to the Secretary of State has confirmed that **this does not apply to driver license renewal notices.** According to Jesse White, the mailing of driver's license renewal notices is required by Illinois law.

President's Report . . .

We do live in interesting times—still no FY16 budget for Illinois. And a most fascinating Presidential campaign!

The past few years, UIUC has offered a retirement planning conference. Each year our chapter has been invited to make a presentation at the conference and to have a table where attendees can pick up information about our organization. Here is the bulk of the brief presentation I made this year:

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*I would like to begin by saying “Congratulations!” It is exciting to be approaching retirement with all the opportunities, adventures, and new experiences it affords. And also congratulations on your decision to attend this seminar. There are many decisions to be made as you contemplate retirement, and you are wise to take advantage of an opportunity to garner information.*

*I applaud the University for offering these seminars. It shows their dedication to and appreciation of its human resources.*

*So, I am here to tell you about the State Universities Annuitants Association. Currently I serve as President of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign chapter. We tend to refer to the organization as SUAA or “soo ah.”*

*First, and most important—SUAA is the only organization that advocates for preserving retirement and healthcare benefits for participants in the State Universities Retirement System (SURS). This includes retirees, current employees, and their dependents and survivors.*

*Here's what our organization has been doing since its founding in 1971:*

- *continuously tracks pension and healthcare benefit issues, state funding, and other related concerns*
- *assures that legislators, executive officers, and other policymakers are knowledgeable about pension and benefits issues*
- *lobbies the state legislature to prevent legislation that would harm members and to support legislation that will make pension and healthcare benefits stronger*
- *provides regular updates to members on topics of interest to all SURS participants.*

*Some important accomplishments:*

- *sued the State regarding the pension reform law which was ruled unconstitutional by the Illinois Supreme Court*

- *prevented a bill from becoming law that could have abolished tuition waivers for university employees*
- *challenged and won the “Kanerva” case which stopped the State from its attempts to deny health care benefits to retirees*

*Membership in SUAA shows elected officials we are united and serious about protecting our benefits. SUAA ensures you have access to the benefits and services you've earned. It helps you to stay up-to-date with the latest and most accurate information.*

*In addition to email briefings on important topics, the UIUC chapter holds two membership meetings each year—one in the spring and one in the fall. All members are invited to attend. We invite a speaker to come to each meeting. For our fall 2015 meeting, Bryan Lewis, Executive Director of SURS, spoke. This April, U of I President Timothy Killeen will speak. We also publish a newsletter twice a year that is sent to all members.*

*In closing, I encourage you to seriously consider joining SUAA. There is a membership application in your folder. Note that you can pay the annual membership fee either by check or by payroll deduction. Payroll deduction is a wonderful option as the fee is spread out over a year with a small portion being taken from each paycheck. Once you retire, you can continue your membership by having the fee deducted from your annuity check.*

*If you decide to join today, you can complete and sign the form and give it to a volunteer at the SUAA table. We will send to the state office any forms you give us. We will be available until 1:00 p.m. If you complete it later, simply send it to the address indicated on the form.*

The invitation to complete the application and leave it at the SUAA table garnered 15 new members! And I am sure that there will be other new members who send in their applications later. This event is definitely a worthwhile partnership with the University.

The legislative committee has written an excellent report which you will find later in this newsletter.

We were saddened to learn of the death of our long-time treasurer, Gerry Brighton. A tribute to him and his many accomplishments over his 95 years is on the front page.

Please plan to attend the spring meeting of our chapter on April 24 at the I-Hotel. I look forward to seeing many of our newest members at that event as well as long-time ones. After the speaker, we will vote to elect four new members to the executive committee. They will replace Tom Conry, Steve Rugg, Rick Schoell, and Ginny Waaler—all of whom have contributed enormously during the two terms they have served.

***Barbara Hartman, President***

## *Nominations & Upcoming Election to the Executive Committee*

At the spring meeting, four members are elected to the twelve-member executive committee for three-year terms. The four nominees below were selected according to Article V of the Bylaws. Additional candidates may be nominated from the membership by petition signed by no fewer than five members and filed with President Barbara Hartman ([blh45@comcast.net](mailto:blh45@comcast.net)) or Secretary Jane Loeb ([jloeb@illinois.edu](mailto:jloeb@illinois.edu)) at least one week before the April 24, 2016 meeting. Nominees added by petition will also appear on the chapter website ([www.suaa-ui.org](http://www.suaa-ui.org)) as time allows, and all nominees will be included on the ballot presented at the meeting. A hard copy of the biographies of nominees added by petition will be available at the meeting.

### *Meet Your Candidates*

**Bill Adams** has spent most of his professional career in higher education. After twelve years at Washington State University, he moved to the University of Illinois-Urbana/Champaign in 1990, working there until his retirement on June 30, 2012. At UIUC, he held positions in the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences as Budget Officer; in the Provost's Office as Associate Provost for Budgeting and Planning; and finishing his career as Associate Chancellor and Chief Staff in the Office of the Chancellor. Post-retirement, he has assisted with special projects in the Office of the President. Bill and his wife, Carolyn, reside in Urbana.



**Kathleen Holden** ~ My degrees are in Social Work from UIUC, and the majority of my career was spent as an administrator at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign. I began as an Affirmative Action Officer in 1981 and from there worked in the Office of Administrative Affairs from 1985 until 1999, when I was appointed Associate Provost and Director of Academic Human Resources. I was appointed Associate Chancellor in 2004. Following my retirement in 2006, I returned to the campus to be the founding director of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI), retiring in 2012. My interests have always centered around not-for-profit programs, which is reflected in my community service on the boards of the United Way, the Humane Society, Allerton Park and Conference Center and most recently, Clark Lindsey Village. My work with OLLI sparked an interest in programs for older adults and currently, I am working with individuals on campus and in the community to pursue a World Health Organization Age Friendly designation for the twin cities of Urbana and Champaign.



**Sue Trippiedi** retired in 2015 after 15 years of service at the University of Illinois. She was the director of the University of Illinois China Executive Leadership Programs 2009 to 2015. She previously held program coordinator and assistant director positions in the College of Business (Master of Science in Finance Program) and assistant and associate director positions in the China Executive Leadership Programs. She has extensive experience in strategic planning, designing and managing executive education programs for senior officials, executives and administrators from major banks, universities, and government organizations in China. She has traveled to China numerous times to meet with CELP business partners and alumni in Beijing, Shanghai, and almost 20 other cities.

Prior to her career at the University of Illinois, she worked at *The News-Gazette* for 22 years in advertising. From 1989 to 2000 she was director of advertising for *The News-Gazette*.



**Richard J. Winkel, Jr.** is the Director, Office of Public Leadership, Institute of Government and Public Affairs, University of Illinois, where he administers the executive leadership programs for the Edgar Fellows Program and its alumni and is leading the campaign to raise \$8 million to endow the program. Winkel is also Deputy Executive Director for Policy Research, Prairie Research Institute, University of Illinois, where he is developing a policy research program related to natural and cultural resource conservation and management, initially focusing on water-related issues with special emphasis on supporting the University's Resilient Watersheds Initiative.

Winkel was an Illinois state senator from 2003 to 2007 and a state representative from 1995 to 2003. Winkel practiced law for 24 years in civil practice. He earned his undergraduate degree at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (B.A. Economics, 1979) and law degree at DePaul University College of Law (J.D., 1982).

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**Treasurer's Report**  
**Year Ended December 31, 2015**  
*Ronald F. Webbink, SUAA-UIUC Treasurer*

SUAA represents annuitants and employees of Illinois Public Universities and Colleges. The UIUC Chapter has no employees, only volunteers. The SUAA office in Springfield has employees whose principle duty is advocacy on behalf of SURS annuitants, to protect our retirement and survivor benefits. Of your \$41 annual dues, \$33 was for SUAA and \$8 for our Chapter, SUAA-UIUC. For the year, the Chapter's share of dues was \$16,177.

Each dollar was used as follows:

|                                              |                      |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Newsletter (SP15 &amp; FA15)</i>          | <i>\$0.23</i>        |
| <i>Meetings (local, regional, and state)</i> | <i>\$0.38</i>        |
| <i>Website (development/maintenance)</i>     | <i>\$0.03</i>        |
| <i>Gain (loss) in reserves</i>               | <i><u>\$0.35</u></i> |
| <b><i>Total</i></b>                          | <b><i>\$1.00</i></b> |

***Seeking Webmaster***  
***Volunteer Position Available***

**If you have website management experience and some extra time to give, you might be who we are looking for.**

**The UIUC Chapter of SUAA seeks a current chapter member to serve as Webmaster for our website. If you have experience updating and creating websites and would be available to keep it up-to-date and to monitor the chapter email, please send an email with a brief description of your experience to [blh45@comcast.net](mailto:blh45@comcast.net). The chapter website can be viewed at <http://suaa-ui.org/>.**



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## **Benefits Report**

Mary Beastall and H. F. Williamson

Any report on annuitant benefits has to be a work in progress. Given the changing environment within which we live, new events may have occurred after this article was written that will affect our members. This is why the SUAA leaders monitor benefits-related activities in order to keep annuitants informed through the material provided on the Chapter and State SUAA websites noted below. It is also important to monitor the CMS and SURS websites discussed below.

### **Claim Payment Delay:**

Until there is an approved FY16 budget for the State of Illinois, claim payments for the Quality Care Dental Plan administered by Delta Dental, the Quality Care Health Plan administered by Cigna, HealthLink OAP and Coventry OAP are on hold. These plans remain active and benefits will be paid according to a set release schedule once the State budget is approved and funds are provided to the plans. This is a reminder that updated information regarding such delays appears on the CMS website under State Employee benefits. This includes the dates of payment for health providers, and notes that late payment will include an interest payment. Some annuitants find it helpful to give copies of this information to their health providers.

### **Benefits Choice Period:**

As previously noted, there are now two Benefit Choice periods for annuitants dependent upon Medicare status of the annuitant and any dependent on the State health insurance plan. The fall period is for annuitants who are Medicare-eligible and whose dependents, if any, are also Medicare-eligible. The Benefit Choice period for other annuitants is in the spring.

### **Did You Know?**

The members of the Chapter Benefits Committee will continue to review and update the information on benefits available to retirees and other annuitants in issues of *The Annuitant* and the Chapter website

(<http://suaa-ui.org>). Most of these will be of interest wherever these individuals are living. Some benefits will be principally for those living in the Champaign-Urbana area. These include (a) benefits associated with I-Cards; (b) access to the Employee Assistance Program; (c) clinics in departments on the UIUC campus providing various services and (d) programs and facilities available to promote fitness and improved health.

**Access through I-Cards.** Retirees with I-Cards have access to many benefits on campus and in the community. If a retiree does not have an I-Card, that retiree should go to the Illini Union Bookstore ID Center on the first floor. Retiree status will be verified and an I-Card issued. In addition to benefits on campus, the I-Card serves as a free pass on any Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District (MTD) bus.

**Employee Assistance Program.** The services of the Faculty Staff Assistance Program are available free of charge for employees, retirees and family members or significant others living in their households. Services include assessments, short-term counseling, crisis services, and referrals to appropriate resources. The offices are located at 1101 West Springfield, Urbana. (Phone 217-244-5312, website <http://fsap.illinois.edu>).

**Audiology Clinic and Speech-Language Impairment Clinic.** These are both in the Department of Speech and Hearing Science. The **Audiology Clinic** (217-333-2230) provides services to individuals of all ages who may be experiencing hearing difficulties, with such services including hearing assessment. The **Speech-Language Pathology Clinic** (217-333-2205) serves individuals of all ages who have communicative impairments. Further information is available on the departmental website <http://shs.illinois.edu>.

**Financial Justice Clinics.** This Clinic in the College of Law provides assistance to elders over 60 who have been victims of financial exploitation. There is no charge for the services of this clinic, although individuals with low income and few assets generally receive priority. Further information is available at <http://law.illinois.edu/academics/elder-financial-justice> or by telephone at 217-244-9494.

*continued on next page*

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## Fitness/Exercise Programs & Facilities

**SilverSneakers Programs.** Those who are SilverSneakers Members have access to facilities and wellness programs throughout the country. Some of the facilities offering this program in Champaign-Urbana are the Mettler Center, the Refinery, Planet Fitness and The Fitness Center. For further information, visit their website at: <https://www.silversneakers.com>.

**The Lifetime Fitness Program.** This program is sponsored by the Department of Kinesiology and Community Health and is designed for residents of the Champaign-Urbana area who are age 55 or older. Activities include group fitness, individual training and aquatics. Further information can be found at <http://lifetimefitnessprogram.kch.illinois.edu>. Members of OLLI receive a 20% discount on fees.

**Campus Recreation.** Retirees who want to continue (or start!) using Campus Recreation facilities such as CRCE and the ARC can have the membership fee deducted from their SURS annuity. The fee is \$40 per month. Your spouse/partner can be added for just \$23 per month. You can join at any time and start the deduction at that point. More information is available at the Campus Recreation website: <http://www.campusrec.illinois.edu/>.

**Walking in UI Armory.** Those who are interested in walking for fitness at the UI Armory may not be aware that seniors 55 and over may purchase a lifetime registration for \$25 rather than pay the \$3 daily. Visit the website at the following URL: [http://fightingillini.com/sports/2015/3/24/uiarmory\\_info.aspx](http://fightingillini.com/sports/2015/3/24/uiarmory_info.aspx) for further information.

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## Staying Informed About Your Benefits

Within SUAA, you can visit the state web site at [www.suaa.org](http://www.suaa.org) and the Chapter web site at [www.suaa-ui.org](http://www.suaa-ui.org). We recommend that you contact Central Management Systems (CMS) concerning questions about health care benefits and the State Universities Retirement System (SURS) about your annuity. The contact information for those offices and further information about what is available on the SURS web site is shown below.

### Central Management Services (CMS)

Employees Benefits pages for State Employees:

**URL:** <http://www.illinois.gov/cms/Employees/benefits/StateEmployee/Pages/default.aspx>

**Phone:** 800-442-1300 or 217-524-4784  
TTY: 866-277-5669

CMS uses your information on file with SURS.  
**Remember to keep your personal information up to date with SURS**

### State Universities Retirement System

(SURS)

**URL:** <http://surs.com/>

**Phone:** 800-ASK-SURS (800-275-7877)  
or 217.378-8800. Fax: 217.378-9800

**Mailing Address:** SURS, P.O. Box 2710,  
Champaign, IL 61825-2710

**Street Address:** 1901 Fox Drive, Champaign,  
Illinois 61820

See more information on the following page about navigating the SURS website and other information of interest.

*continued on next page*

The SURS home page provides access to a number of topics of interest to our members such as the schedule of the “Post-Retirement Seminars” held in Champaign each fall and spring. The “Life Events” link at the top of the home page provides a link to the “Death of a Member” site which contains instructions on the steps that survivors should take when this event occurs. The steps presented there are similar to those discussed in the Survivor Assistance Workshops offered in the past.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, you can use the “Member Login” link at the top of the page to learn how to reach what is essentially your own home page. After entering your username and password (established on your first visit), you can view a wide range of information about your annuity including your entire payment history and your current payment information. You can also change such items as your address, beneficiaries, phone number or email address, and your Federal Income Tax withholding status. For those in the Champaign area without easy computer access, SURS has set up a kiosk computer station in their lobby for its members. The receptionist is available to assist annuitants using the kiosk.



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## IN MEMORIAM

Terri Palumbo

As a service to readers, *The Annuitant* publishes a listing of deceased employees and annuitants taken from *Inside Illinois* issues as well as other print sources. The following listing gives the name, date of death, and age at death (when known) for those individuals whose death notices appear between August 7, 2015 and January 29, 2016.

Due to increased privacy restrictions and the lack of public information in many obituary notices, this list can be difficult to develop. Thus the list may gradually become less comprehensive.

- Abelmann, Nancy, 56, 1/6/16*  
*Adams, Lamar Arttise, 32, 11/22/15*  
*Alexander, Reid, 66, 11/18/15*  
*Alley, Clarence Herbert, 73, 11/26/15*  
*Alpert, Daniel, 98, 11/4/15*  
*Anderson, Verlin B. (Andy), 86, 1/11/16*  
*Barbee, Martha Rae Swartz, 80, 1/16/16*  
*Barden, James E., Sr., 90, 1/6/16*  
*Barnett, Dr. Sol, 83, 1/2/16*  
*Barnhart, Wilma A., 83, 11/25/15*  
*Bays, Robert E., 94, 10/6/15*  
*Belford, Linn R., 83, 8/14/15*  
*Bender, Tim A., 48, 11/4/15*  
*Bretzlaff, Anna Jane, 96, 8/30/15*  
*Cable, Dennis W., 68, 9/3/15*  
*Chandler, Marlene, 75, 11/1/15*  
*Chapa, Jorga, 62, 10/19/15*  
*Cler, Alfred (Bud), 91, 1/14/16*  
*Clevenger, Marvin C., 86, 11/5/15*  
*Cornelius, Janet, 77, 9/19/15*  
*Cousins, Kerry W., 61, 11/19/15*  
*Cullop, Samuel, 63, 12/14/15*  
*Dahl, John R., 92, 1/15/16*  
*Davis, Malcolm Gale, 97, 1/12/16*  
*Davison, Kenneth V., 96, 9/17/15*  
*Deschene, Donald Richard, 84, 11/17/15*  
*Dodson, Donald D., 80, 11/10/15*  
*Endres, Jody Michelle, 45, 11/18/15*  
*Evans, Jacques B., 95, 11/23/15*  
*Ewing, Thomas Newell Jr., 101, 8/18/15*  
*Farrell, Mary Ellen (Mel), 64, 9/3/15*  
*Fieldbinder, Shirley, 84, 8/30/15*  
*Frick, Arthur A., 95, 12/9/15*  
*Fry, Harold Warren, 88, 11/14/15*  
*Gallivan, Richard F. (Rich), 82, 10/22/15*  
*Ganley, Diana Jane Fillenwarth, 65, 1/10/16*  
*Gieselman, Robert, 83, 9/12/15*  
*Gladney, Gene Paul, 76, 10/26/15*  
*Hawker, Lawrence L., 88, 9/14/15*  
*Higgins, Charles Woodrow, 91, 11/10/15*  
*Hittle, Carl Nelson, 93, 11/4/15*  
*Huff, William Howard, 93, 10/30/15*  
*Jones, Benjamin A. Jr., 89, 9/21/15*  
*Kingery, Kinney Lee, 68, 9/7/15*  
*Kyse, Connie, 60, 8/15/15*  
*Larson, Bruce, 88, 9/30/15*  
*Lipari, David Martin, 55, 10/9/15*  
*Lueschen, Guenther, 85, 11/15/15*  
*Lyon, Betty, 87, 8/24/15*  
*Mamer, Stuart Miles, 94, 10/26/15*  
*Mann, Christian (John) Jr., 83, 9/2/15*  
*Martinie, Karmen J. Trick, 87, 12/1/15*  
*McGuffey, Shirley Mae, 80, 12/7/15*  
*Mistry, Sorab Pirozshah (Soli), 95, 12/28/15*  
*Mitchem, Homer, 84, 8/16/15*  
*Moushmof, Milco, 88, 9/9/15*  
*Nugent, Tim, 92, 11/11/15*  
*Offner, David, 92, 12/5/15*  
*Opolka, John Carl (Junior), 87, 12/11/15*  
*Pratt, Charles W., 71, 9/20/15*  
*Robinson, Arthur R., 85, 10/15/15*  
*Robinson, Jerry W. Jr., 83, 8/31/15*  
*Rodriguez, Beverly D., 81, 1/11/16*  
*Russell, Sandra (Jill), 65, 10/4/15*  
*Seibold, Lois J., 84, 12/29/15*  
*Sherrill, Mary Lee, 55, 12/11/15*  
*Shimooka, Kazuko, 100, 10/18/15*  
*Shook, Jack, 81, 9/5/15*  
*Skaperdas, Dominic O., 92, 1/9/16*  
*Steinkamp, Marjorie, 85, 8/29/15*  
*Toalson, Robert F., 83, 9/15/15*  
*Vernon, Edwin W., 88, 10/31/15*  
*Vinton, Dorothy A., 81, 11/17/15*  
*Walter, Harold, 89, 11/9/15*  
*Williams, Helen R., 88, 12/15/15*  
*Woodruff, Donald W., 93, 10/9/15*  
*Wycoff, Violet Mary, 92, 12/7/15*

# State News

## **Legislative Update**

*Robert Rich, Steve Rugg  
Helen Satterthwaite, Rick Schoell*

### **Budget Dysfunction**

In the hour before Governor Bruce Rauner delivered his second annual budget address to the General Assembly on February 17, an analyst with almost four decades of experience covering Illinois state government was asked by a radio reporter for his assessment of the state's budget circumstances. "Last year was unprecedented," he observed. "This year...I just don't have the words for it." Apparently words like unparalleled, unfathomable, or unbelievable were inadequate to the task, though any would be accurate and all are appropriate.

At this writing the state of Illinois is in its ninth month – three-quarters of Fiscal Year 2016 – with no state budget and no serious prospects that one will emerge. Nor does it appear that progress will be made toward a budget for Fiscal Year 2017 which begins July 1, 2016. Indeed some both within and outside the General Assembly are suggesting that no 2017 budget will be produced until after the November election.

The Governor approved FY2016 funding for elementary/secondary education but vetoed almost all of the remaining FY2016 appropriations sent to him by the General Assembly. Ironically, a series of judicial orders and a few successful "fund sweep" appropriations bills have meant that spending has continued in the absence of a budget for roughly 90% of state-funded activities and agencies, although many social service agencies that rely on state support have had to stop or seriously curtail their efforts. Even more ironically, the cost-cutting measures that were included in the General Assembly's budget also fell victim to the Governor's veto, which means that the spending rates on which those court-ordered expenditures are based will continue at unsustainable levels.

It would be fair to say that no major state-supported activity has fared worse during this prolonged budget dysfunction than higher education. Funding for the state's five public pension systems benefits from a "continuing appropriation" approach that provides a first-dollar priority for the annual state contribution to retirement. But no other segment of the higher education budget, whether for public universities, community colleges or the Monetary Assistance Program (MAP) has received a single dollar of state support for the current fiscal year. Indeed, just as this is written, the Governor has vetoed a new appropriation passed by the General Assembly that would have provided 2016 funding for MAP grants to students and support for community colleges.

That this latest special effort to provide some measure of support for higher education included nothing for the state's public universities must be regarded as an indicator of the depths to which the priority for them has fallen. Both the Governor and legislative leaders who support him have commented on the need to reduce "administrative costs" in higher education. Some have even suggested that not providing appropriations for the current year might effectively weed-out weaker or duplicative programs. In any case, whether by design or coincidence, higher education funding has become the largest single element at risk in the battle between the Governor and the leaders of the General Assembly.

### **Other Legislative Efforts – Pension Reform**

Absent an agreement on the overall budget, it seems unlikely that much other substantive legislation will be enacted during the spring session. While there has been considerable talk about the ongoing need to revise and reform the funding formula that covers elementary and secondary education, it is almost certain that no progress can be made until the operating budget stalemate is resolved.

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The Governor has also indicated his support for a pension reform proposal offered some time ago by Senate President John Cullerton. The Cullerton approach was built around the principle of “consideration.” That is, offering those enrolled in a public pension plan a choice between two benefits. In this case, the choice is between sacrificing the current annual pension annuity increases in order to keep health insurance coverage in retirement or a similar either/or scenario. Some believe this approach would be Constitutional, but others disagree. It does seem fair to suggest that if such a proposal were enacted and approved by the Governor it would face a Constitutional challenge.

Given the Illinois Supreme Court’s sweeping rejection of the last pension reform legislation, it seems that any new pension reform proposals will not change anything for current annuitants. Indeed, early in his first year the Governor had indicated his belief that annuitants should be able to “keep what they earned.”

### **One Bright Spot – SUAA Successes**

In this context of budgetary gloom and political deadlock, there is clearly one bright spot. SUAA has achieved a string of significant legal successes in challenging multiple efforts to reduce the benefits which SURS recipients receive. In the summer and fall of 2012 SUAA initiated and led the fight to defeat the legislatively proposed Constitutional Amendment 49 which appeared to allow the legislature to alter or eliminate the Constitutional prohibition against diminishing public employee pension benefits. SUAA later intervened in lawsuits brought to overturn sharp increases in employee health insurance premiums, successfully stopping a doubling of those premiums and ultimately eliminating them altogether. SUAA attorneys also were influential in assisting the courts to reach a fair cost assessment for legal services in those cases.

And certainly most significantly, SUAA attorneys led the successful fight to overturn PA98-0599, the “pension reform” law passed by the General Assembly in 2014, which eliminated the 3% Automatic Annual Increase in pension annuities for SURS pensioners and which reduced benefits for those still working in other ways.

These SUAA successes resulted from the comprehensive efforts of SUAA staff and members in keeping track of

the countless pieces of legislation and amendments that attempt to reduce benefits for current and retired SURS participants. While we can celebrate these achievements with pride, it is clear that constant vigilance is required to find the obvious – and not so obvious – attempts to curtail benefits for public employees. Readers are encouraged to keep track of ongoing efforts by visiting the SUAA website ([www.suaa.org](http://www.suaa.org)) often during the legislative session.



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## ***News from the SUAA***

*Tom Conry*

The SUAA activity in Springfield since November has been quiet but active. The lack of a State budget has been the front page news, but the SUAA effort has been to quietly work with university and community college leaders and legislators in their districts to mitigate the damage that is being done to those institutions and their students.

The two biggest issues from the retirees’ viewpoint are healthcare and pensions. No changes in healthcare will come about until the State and AFSME union reach a contract agreement. On the pension issue, the Supreme Court has ruled on PA 98-0599, but there are a number of bills that have been filed in late February that are bad for those presently working and for the stability of the pension systems. Simply put, various legislators on both sides of the aisle have introduced legislation that would put the viability of the State’s pension systems at risk. For up-to-date information visit the Mini-Briefings at [www.suaa.org](http://www.suaa.org).

Internally, the SUAA Board of Directors passed a total revision to the Constitution at the Summer Meeting, which is now called the BYLAWS. The Bylaws Committee has been charged with drafting a Policy Manual to accompany the new BYLAWS that will be submitted to the State Executive Committee later this spring.

There is an ongoing need to keep a Legal Fund. SUAA was successful, with other plaintiffs, in obtaining the Supreme Court ruling on PA 98-0599, however there will be other issues related to healthcare and pensions that will surface and require SUAA to challenge them in the courts. If you have the desire and the means, please consider contributing to the Legal Fund. For contribution information, go to <http://suaa.org/ContributeToLegalFund.php>.



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