

# UNPRECEDENTED ILLINOIS COALITION MOBILIZING SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PENSIONS

*Group Representing More Than 1 Million Members to Run Television Ads,  
Grassroots Effort*

CHICAGO, IL—Bolstered by a new poll showing a strong majority of Illinois voters want government to keep its promise and pay the modest retirement benefits to public employees, an unprecedented coalition called We Are One Illinois is launching a statewide campaign aimed at protecting the pensions on which teachers and nurses, fire fighters and police, disability caregivers and other public employees rely.

“Whatever their political persuasion--Democrat, independent or Republican—Illinois voters believe that public employees should receive their promised pensions,” said Michael Carrigan, president of the Illinois AFL-CIO. “Our television advertising and grassroots efforts will focus on the critical services that public employees provide and the widespread support they have among Illinois residents.”

Conducted by Hart Research Associates on behalf of the coalition, the statewide survey showed that more than 60 percent of all voters--including more than half of all Republicans--agreed with the statement that, despite the deficit, public employees should receive their promised pension.

We Are One Illinois coalition members include the Illinois AFL-CIO, Illinois Education Association, Illinois Federation of Teachers, Associated Fire Fighters of Illinois, AFSCME Council 31, Illinois Police Benevolent and Protective Association, Fraternal Order of Police, Service Employees International Union, Laborers International Union of North America Midwest Region and the Illinois Public Pension Fund Association. The coalition represents more than 1 million members across Illinois.

We Are One Illinois will begin a statewide television campaign today. The commercials are available to view at [www.WeAreOneIllinois.org](http://www.WeAreOneIllinois.org) and feature public employees, including firefighters, police officers, teachers and nurses, talking about the work they do every day like fix streets, save lives and teach children.

Key issues that will be highlighted in the campaign include:

- Employees Provide Essential Services: Firefighters, police, teachers, nurses, child protection workers and disability caregivers are just some of the public sector employees that Illinois residents rely on every day.

- Most Public Employees Are Not Eligible for Social Security: Unlike private-sector workers, most public employees—including teachers and university employees, police and fire fighters, and Chicago and Cook County employees—do not qualify for Social Security.
- Modest Pensions Constitute Life Savings: A public employee's pension is his or her own life savings, saved paycheck by paycheck—in most cases 8 or 9 percent of every check. Illinois public employees retire on very modest pensions, averaging just \$32,000 a year after a career dedicated to public service.
- Politicians Caused Pension Debt: For decades, Illinois politicians shorted or skipped the employer contributions required by law, creating the nation's largest pension debt—even as public employees always paid their share faithfully and in full.

In addition to television advertising, We Are One Illinois has launched a grassroots educational campaign to mobilize union members and Illinoisans across the state to stop politicians in Springfield from passing legislation to cut the modest pensions earned and paid into by public employees.

More information on the coalition is available at [www.WeAreOneIllinois.org](http://www.WeAreOneIllinois.org).