



# Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund

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November 8, 2006

To the Editor:

While "Illinois' pension nightmare" (Page 1, Nov. 3) correctly identifies some of the problems confronting the state's public pensions, its doomsday scenario only serves to scare taxpayers and public employees.

The funding shortfall some Illinois pension plans face is not a short-term problem, it is a long-term problem. But it is fixable. The solution will require discipline from our governor-elect and General Assembly to secure a dedicated funding stream for public pensions. It also will require discipline on the part of unions to stop focusing on benefit enhancements and to focus instead on securing the benefits they have achieved.

Public pension plans are a form of deferred compensation. They represent benefits that have been earned in good faith — but not paid. Public pensions help municipalities attract and retain quality workers so that vital services like driving school buses, cleaning streets and collecting garbage are delivered effectively.

The Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF), which manages more than \$21 billion in assets for 250,000 municipal employees and retirees, is nearly 95 percent funded. IMRF retirees, along with other Illinois public sector retirees, are an important part of the state's economic engine: Eighty-five percent of retired municipal workers remain in Illinois and plow their retirement dollars back into the state's economy. In fact, 2.9 percent of Illinois' economy is attributable to retired government workers spending their public pension benefits.

Some Illinois pension plans are facing a problem that must be addressed. But the focus should be on solutions, not scare tactics.

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