

Oppose HJR 45

- Illinois' public employee collective bargaining laws were designed to promote stability in labor management relationships by balancing the interests of all the citizens of the State of Illinois, including those of employees who provide public services.
- In the nearly three decades since the law was enacted, the state and the unions representing its employees have been able to come to terms in contract negotiations without a single work stoppage.
- HJR 45 would intrude on—and likely disrupt--that process which has well served the public policy interests it was designed to address by allowing the General Assembly to put a cap on pay raises that could be agreed to in contract negotiations.
- There is no reason for such interference. State employee salaries and union contracts are not responsible for the State's current fiscal problems. To the contrary, through collective bargaining, state employees have helped the state to achieve hundreds of millions of dollars in savings in these difficult economic times.
- Illinois has the nation's smallest state workforce per capita. According to U.S. Census Data, the State of Illinois has 54 full-time employees per 10,000 population, the lowest ratio of any of the 50 states. By way of comparison: Iowa has 94 state employees per 10,000 residents; Missouri, 101; Kentucky, 102. The average number of state employees for all states is 85 per 10,000 population, more than 50% higher than in Illinois.
- In terms of average state employee salaries, Illinois ranks seventh behind New Jersey, California, New York, and Connecticut and our Midwestern neighbors Minnesota and Iowa. That's a couple of notches lower than comparative legislative salaries. In that category Illinois ranks fifth, behind California, New York, Pennsylvania and Michigan. In private sector wages, Illinois is tied for sixth place with Maryland, behind New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey and California.
- Given Illinois' rankings: fifth in legislative salaries, sixth in private sector salaries; and seventh in state government salaries, there's no basis for the claim that state salaries are out of line and need to be reined in. Nor is there any basis for the allegation—implicit in this resolution--that the salaries of frontline state employees--whose wages constitute little more than 5% of the State's budget--are responsible for the state's fiscal plight.

- HJR 45 would also seek to bar this governor or a future governor from entering into a no-layoff agreement in consideration for union concessions.
- State employees deferred scheduled pay increases, restructured health insurance, took voluntary furlough days, and developed innovative agency reforms—all to save the state hundreds of millions of dollars in these tight fiscal times. The commitment made in return to refrain from laying off employees does not just benefit union members. It benefits all of the citizens of Illinois who depend on the services they provide. State agencies are already stretched to the max to be able to effectively and timely fulfill their responsibilities. The reduction of present staffing levels would make it even more difficult to provide needed services to Illinois citizens.
- “No layoff” agreements are far from unprecedented. Our union has entered into similar agreements right here in Illinois with the cities of Joliet, Alton, Villa Park, Christian County, Iroquois County and Knox County to name a few. Other states have entered into similar agreements with our and other unions in the recent past; among those states are New Jersey, New York, Iowa, Rhode Island and Connecticut. Public officials and the press welcomed, even lauded, those agreements.
- This resolution represents an unwarranted intrusion into a collective bargaining process which has worked well for three decades. The General Assembly should be working to fix those things that are broken. But don’t try to fix what isn’t broken—and what has well-served our state for decades—the collective bargaining process.