Michael J. Zalewski Silences Taxpayer Opposition

Chicago—The Illinois 100th General Assembly Revenue & Finance Committee held a hearing Wednesday, May 2 on HR 1025. HR 1025 is a bill filed by Rep. Michael J. Madigan (D) in support of the Income Tax Increase Amendment, a graduated income tax increase for Illinois. In response, over 2150 witness slips have been filed to present oral testimony, written testimony, or merely have record of appearance. The Director of Outreach for Taxpayers United of America (TUA) was registered to be among those giving oral testimony.

However, the Revenue & Finance Committee Chairperson Michael J. Zalewski (D) only featured proponents of the Income Tax Increase Amendment to testify before the committee. No speakers opposed to the Amendment were able to testify, and TUA representatives were initially informed there were not on the list to testify. This one sided hearing makes horrible and corrupt sense considering the leadership of the committee.

Michael J. Zalewski, beside chairing the committee and being a Madigan puppet, is also a Chief Co-Sponsor of HR 1025. This abuse also happened under the watch of noted Taxpayer Traitor David Harris (R) who voted to raise the Illinois State Income Tax by $5 Billion dollars.

Despite this silencing of Taxpayers, TUA will spread the message of opposition to higher taxes to fund lavish, gold plated pensions. The Director of Outreach’s written statement can be found below.

“Honorable Chair, and members of the Revenue and Finance Committee, I am Val Zimnicki, Director of Outreach for Taxpayers United of America.

As I look down the road toward retirement, I am struck by how unfair the current Illinois pension system is to the middle class.

As someone who works in the private sector, the most retirement income I can look forward to is about $17,000, from Social Security—if I am lucky to get that much.

In contrast, retired government employees receive lavish, gold-plated retirement benefits, and, as an Illinois taxpayer, I am forced to pay for these benefits through the state income tax.

The current, unsustainable state pension system has created many pension millionaires among
Former Illinois Governor Jim Edgar (R), no friend of taxpayers, is rolling in money, thanks to these Illinois government-employee pension plans. Mr. Edgar gets an Illinois General Assembly pension of $166,000 per year, a State University Retirement System pension of $83,000 per year, and is currently hired-back “part-time” by the University of Illinois for another $62,796 per year—pulling in more than $312,000 per year.

Former Governor Edgar is a pension millionaire. Former Governor Quinn (D) is a pension millionaire. Former Governor Thompson (R) is a pension millionaire. These three so-called ‘public servants’ are going to receive a total of $11,388,000 in pension payouts over their expected lifetimes.

I am paying for their extravagant retirements, because most of the money from the recent state income tax increase is being poured into the insolvent state pension funds that send monthly checks to them.

The State of Illinois is functionally bankrupt, and government-employee pensions are to blame.

Illinois taxpayers are voting with their feet. In 2017, the number of people moving from Illinois to states with lower taxes outstripped arrivals by 115,000. And it will get a lot uglier if the proposed state Income Tax Increase Amendment is passed.

If the state income tax, now a flat tax, is converted to a graduated state income tax, the exodus from Illinois by the middle class will become a stampede. The state will literally go under financially.

It is impossible for the state to tax itself out of its current downward spiral. There is not enough money to go around to pay for its current unfunded pension liabilities of more than $130,000 billion.

There is a solution, and it also involves a state constitutional amendment. The current Constitution must be amended to allow for reasonable decreases in pension benefits for retired government employees.

In addition, all new government hires must be placed in 401(k)-style pension plans, so there will be no increases in the current unfunded pension liabilities.

As legislators, your allegiance is to the constituents who elected you. You have one chance—and only one chance—to keep Illinois from going bankrupt. Thank you for your attention.”