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AURORA PROPERTY TAXES SUBSIDIZE LAVISH MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEE PENSIONS

Aurora--Taxpayers United of America's Director of Outreach Val W. Zimnicki, in Aurora last week, called for the city to engage seriously with pension reform.

"It is fascinating how much things can change over 10 years." Said Zimnicki.

"In 2011, the amount that taxpayers in the City of Aurora contributed to IMRF (Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund) with their property taxes was \$2,712,000. (The IMRF sucks up property taxes, while the other government pensions are supplemented with the state income tax.)

The amount contributed to the police pension fund was \$10,155,400, and the firefighter pension fund was \$8,339,700. Let's look at how these numbers compare to 2021."

"In 2021, City of Aurora taxpayers' property taxes subsidized IMRF with \$4,005,000. The amount contributed to the police pension fund was \$19,039,600, and to the firefighter pension fund, \$15,291,100."

"In the span of 10 years, Aurora taxpayers are spending millions more on the lavish, gold-plated pensions of retired government employees. IMRF pension payments have gone up 47.67%, police pension payments have gone up 87.48%, and firefighter pension payments have gone up 83.35%. These payments are made yearly, and are expected to go even higher next year."

"Aurora Taxpayers cannot afford this burden. In a study done by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, it was revealed that the tax rate of a median-valued home in the United States was 1.49 percent in 2017. Only a handful of cities have effective tax rates that are roughly 2.5 times higher than the average, which includes Aurora. The City of Aurora was shown to have an effective property tax rate of 3.76%!"

"The fact that so many taxpayer dollars are pulled from Aurora taxpayer's pockets and funneled into the black hole that is the Illinois pension system is abominable. Taxpayers are always told

that taxes are used to fund 'basic necessities.' Instead, they are used to fund the lavish retirements of government employees who retire in their 50s and early 60s."

"Take for example William A. Wiet. Wiet was estimated in 2020 to receive \$137,049 annually from his IMRF pension. He paid \$158,009 into his own pension, and is estimated to receive \$3,365,886 over the course of his lifetime."

"Another example is Steven E. Booth. Booth was estimated in 2020 to receive \$130,451 annually from his IMRF pension. He paid \$100,020 into his own pension, and is estimated to receive \$3,891,301 over the course of his lifetime. Booth retired at the age of 55."

"Instead of benefiting a handful of elite government pensioners to sit around unproductively, the State of Illinois and Gov. Jay Robert 'J. B.' Pritzker should implement pension reform to reduce taxpayer burdens. Meaningful tax cuts can bring growth back to Illinois, and reverse the outflow of Illinois residents."

"To that end, the City of Aurora should stop being a benefactor of government pensions and, instead, be a responsible steward of taxpayer's money. It is time for those responsible for the City of Aurora's finances to take a stand, and demand pension reform."