

From Daniel T. Nelson
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The 2009 Veto Session of the 96th General Assembly has been accurately been dubbed by some as “a session of half-measures and false starts”. Few bills left their assigned committees from the Spring Session, including FOP initiatives concerning cost of living increases for widows of fallen officers and one that would allow military veterans to buy-back service time for pension purposes. With just six session days to pass legislation, lawmakers made it clear that the agenda was being limited to the State’s money problems. With public scrutiny demanding action, compromise was back on the table, some of the accomplishments of the short session were:

- Campaign finance reform started strong, but finished much weaker than most had hoped. The new law limits the amount of money any individual, union, business or political action committee can give a candidate, committee or political party. Records of contributions of \$1,000 or more must be made public within two business days (if received 30 days before an election) or five days (if not). The grumble heard ‘round the capitol, however, is the lack of limits placed on party leadership to bankroll candidates. See who is giving and who is receiving the funding and otherwise get the facts on all things related to the Illinois elections rules at <http://www.elections.il.gov/Default.aspx>
- Funding for Illinois college students was *almost* provided for the Monetary Awards Program (MAP). With many legislators facing elections, and bus loads of protestors filling the capitol rotunda, the bill to authorize funding passed; noticeably without a State budget to support it. The bill’s democratic sponsors responded to that fact by stating that the bill was more of a message to the Governor regarding the importance of the program.
- Recall Vote: Illinoisans will soon get the chance to do something in case of ‘voter’s remorse’. On the ballot in November 2010 will be a measure that will allow an Illinois Governor to be removed by voters. YOU STILL HAVE TO GET OUT AND VOTE YOURSELF THIS POWER ! However, unlike other states with recall procedures, the measure does not include any authority to recall state legislators.
- Pension Benefits Under Fire: The Municipal League and a coalition of gold coast community leaders tried to push a bill through to reduce their statutory contributions to Police and Fire Pension’s. They have borrowed from the panicked style of those who gave us the Wall Street bail-out, telling legislators that paying for public pensions will surely bankrupt local governments. While playing down their failure to keep up on funding schedules made by their own pension boards, they instead pointed to the new buildings and equipment they purchased to help officers do their jobs better.

The FOP State Lodge successfully opposed the bill; testifying in committee hearings and meeting several times with Northwest Municipal Conference representatives. But in the end, they walked away from the table because concessions offered by Police and Fire only amounted to a little more than a half million per community for 2010. The bill was stopped in the veto session but Police Pensions will, without a doubt, be under attack again in the Spring Session. The State Lodge is working hard to counter the municipal coalition’s lobbying efforts in Springfield and YOU need the facts to defend against the propaganda on the local level. Go to the source by

reading the exact terms of the bill as well as a summary prepared by the Legislative Reference Bureau at:

<http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/billstatus.asp?DocNum=2011&GAID=10&GA=96&DocTypeID=SB&LegID=44923&SessionID=76>

- Legislator's Salaries Frozen: In literally the final minutes of the session, Representative Bill Black(R)- Danville, compelled the General Assembly to call, and subsequently pass a bill to suspend the cost-of-living adjustment to their own salaries for next year. Call it just a symbolic gesture or a good political move in an election year, but it was the right thing to do.

The General Assembly adjourned on October 30, 2009 and will reconvene on January 12, 2010 with the State in essentially the same position it was a year ago. Thus, the bills initiated at the start of the 96th General Assembly will be seen through to enactment in the upcoming Spring Session. Accordingly, your State Lodge will continue to safeguard the interests of the Order at the State Capitol, following the direction set by the Legislative Committee and the Board of Trustees.