

My fellow Captains:

Today I appeared before the Pensions and Investments Committee of the Illinois Senate along with Sean Smoot, our PBPA attorney, to give testimony as to the Association's position on SB 1874. This bill, proposed by State Senator Iris Martinez and supported by Mark Donahue of the Fraternal Order of Police, would have removed the statutorily required positions of a sergeant's representative and a representative of lieutenants and higher ranks (including us) on the Chicago Police Pension Board to be replaced by 3 representatives elected "at-large" by all ranks.

As a result of the efforts of Mr. Smoot's lobbying and the testimony today, this bill has been essentially passed upon by the committee pending an agreement between the City, the PBPA units and the FOP. Per Mr. Smoot, without any agreement or compromise the bill will not move forward in the legislative process; it is not likely that such agreement will occur as the bill is presently written.

Here is the text of my prepared remarks to the Senators:

*"My name is Marc Buslik. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to appear before you today.*

*"I am here formally on behalf of the Chicago Police Captains' Association and informally representing each senior police manager from the newest lieutenant, to captains, to commanders, deputy chiefs, chiefs, deputy superintendents, assistant superintendents, and the superintendent of police.*

*"I am a 30-year veteran of the Chicago Police Department, having been a captain for 11 years. I am completing my doctorate in criminology at the University of Illinois, and have a Master of Public Administration degree from the University. I teach policing at the University of Illinois and am a consultant in policing for the US Department of Justice. I am the chairman of special projects for the Chicago Police Captain's Association.*

*"I am here to ask that you vote no on this bill. As proposed, SB 1874 will have the practical effect of disenfranchising hundreds of members of the Chicago Police Department from input into the management of their pension.*

*"This body, the state House, and the Governor of Illinois recently made it clear that the soundness of the Chicago Police Pension Fund is critical to the recovery of Illinois' economic condition. Yet this bill would serve to create a scenario where accountability is considerably diminished.*

*"An "at-large" election of pension board representatives for three board positions will not encourage the election of the "best and brightest." It will instead be subject to such influence that all three positions will likely be filled by three members of police officer or detective rank, regardless of qualifications and the ability to represent the ENTIRE range of police department members.*

*“This august body, the Illinois legislature, acted appropriately and with great intellect in establishing the specifications for the three pension board positions: 1 police officer or detective, 1 sergeant, representing the first line supervisory rank, and 1 member representing lieutenants, captains and command rank personnel, the executive management of the police department.*

*“The Chicago Fraternal Order of Police provides to each of its members appearing before the pension board requesting disability benefits and other consideration, an attorney to assist with the presentation, free of charge. Should all three of these members also be police officers, I expect that the best interests of ALL the members of the pension fund, and those of the taxpayers, will not be protected. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, the fix might be in.”*

At this point, I provided the Senators with an analogy: if the Illinois Senate members were elected “at-large” as proposed for our pension board, then it is likely that the Senate would be made up of a disproportionate number of members from a “6-0-6” ZIP code, thereby leaving a considerable number of Illinois citizens without adequate representation.

I continued with my remarks:

*“A balance must be struck. The legislature recognized this and so the present rules have worked well for decades. There is NO compelling reason to alter this design. Yet in these days of economic uncertainty and risk there is considerable reason to be protective of it.*

*“So again, I implore you to vote no on this bill and to drive a stake through this potentially money-sucking vampire.”*

Mr. Smoot then reminded the Senators that the current structure of the Pension Board is already based on an agreement between the various stakeholders and that there has not been put forth a compelling reason to make a change in its structure.

Clearly Sen. Martinez was not pleased with the response from the PBPA, or the attention from our members and other interested parties, with only the FOP supporting the bill. As a result of a mixed response from the Senators on the committee, they made the above decision.

Please note that immediately after the hearing, Det. Donahue approached me in the hallway outside of the hearing room and stated, “So you think the police officers don’t have intellect?” As you can see above, this was not what I said. Clearly he was not paying attention during the meeting and he does not understand our position regarding this bill.