

We have a primary election in Illinois next week – Tuesday, February 2nd.

Here are some facts to keep in mind as you consider which candidates to support.

Illinois is virtually bankrupt.

It cannot pay its debts. Its annual budget is currently \$14-\$15 Billion in the hole.

The State's total liability for UNFUNDED pension and retiree health care debt is in the range of \$120 Billion – which amounts to about \$25,000 for the average Illinois household.

Teachers and State workers are entitled to security – to reasonable pensions and access to health care.

The problem is: The State has not funded these costs adequately, and now it can't afford to.

Without proper funding and reforms, the funds will run out of money – a disaster for retirees and their families.

What kind of reforms?

State retirement benefits, including retiree health care, must be brought into line with benefit levels prevailing in the private sector – those available to most taxpayers.

The State's pension plans must be amended for employees prospectively – while making sure to protect fully the vested contract rights of retirees and current employees.

Why should voters care?

Unfunded retirement obligations are already crowding out State funding for our public schools – our State's universities and community colleges – and social service agencies. Health care providers aren't being paid.

The State's finances must be fixed. Budget cuts and reforms of the retirement plans are essential.

If the painful reforms and cuts are not made now, the pain in future years will be more severe. People and businesses – and investment – will leave the State. Jobs will be lost. The vicious downward cycle – loss of jobs, loss of tax base, more taxes piled on those who remain – will continue.

The borrowing has to stop. Continuing to push today's costs off to the future avoids the hard choices and burdens our children.

As you think about your vote on February 2nd – and next November – ask yourself:

Which candidates will be the best ones to fix this mess?

For more information, go to IllinoisIsBroke.com.

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