

They're At It Again – And This Time They Want ALL Our Pensions!

Every time you turn around, it's something new, and way too often it's also something bad. Well, this time it's both.

Remember last year how the state legislature passed a bill they called pension reform? None of us was very happy about it, because things like air-time, how sick leave counts, what workers have to pay and what the new lower benefits would look like for new workers (not us) were just one more thing we had to deal with that wasn't as good or the same as before.

Now it looks like they weren't happy with what they got then, and this time they want it all – even from us!

Our friend Chuck Reed, the mayor of San Jose (he was the guy who went after the City workers' pension benefits and got the voters of San Jose to approve what he wanted to do to his work force; they did, and now the workers are paying nearly 40% more for a far lower retirement benefit than they had a year ago) has decided that San Jose wasn't enough. He's put together a proposed initiative that will do to all of us what he's already done to his own workforce.

Chuck is so proud of himself that he wants to take it statewide. His original plan hit only workers from the City of San Jose; his new plan is to hit every public worker throughout the state, from workers in private retirement plans to workers in 1937 Act counties to teachers in STRS to all of us in PERS. Essentially what he wants to do is "freeze" the retirement benefit entitlement of every worker at current levels, drastically cut retirement benefit entitlements of every worker in the future, and give employers a way to not only freeze our benefits but cut them back as much as they want.

When we came to work here, we all were guaranteed a basic pension based on a formula that would not go down but stay where it was or increase if employers wanted to do it. Our pensions were vested – guaranteed to us at the rate that was promised to us when we started work here. They couldn't be taken from us no matter what, because that was the promise of public service – you wouldn't get rich, but the work was steady and stable, the benefits were good and if you put in your good hard work for the years you worked you could expect a decent pension at the end of your service. If Chuck Reed's initiative makes it onto the ballot and gets passed, that will all come to a crashing end. It's bad enough that future workers will get far less money when they retire. Now he's coming for the rest of us!

Did you know that the average school worker's pension is less than \$25,000 a year? How many of us can feel rich on that? But Chuck Reed thinks that's just too much. He seems to think his city's overspending is workers' fault, and the workers are to blame for the current economic situation. If we let this initiative get on the ballot and get passed by the voters, we will be punished for others' faults.

Reed has filed his initiative with the Attorney General and will begin collecting signatures soon. If it makes it onto the 2014 ballot, we will have a huge fight on our hands. Not only will it be there, but critical congressional and senate seats will be up for election along with state assembly and senate seats and all the rest that comes with a mid-term election. Remember our legislators' decision to cut future workers' retirement benefits? We fought that like crazy, but we lost. Remember last year's battle over Proposition 32? It took everything we had to beat that back, but we won. Are you ready for another fight? This one's coming right for us, so if you ever thought politics don't affect your future, think again. This is about the future economic well-being of us and our families.

It's not a great idea to sit by and let this one make it on to the ballot. We can help keep it from getting there. Here's what we can do:

- If you see initiative signature gatherers at the market or in shopping centers, DON'T SIGN THE PETITION! In fact, walk up and have a chat with them about what this initiative will do and try to convince others not to sign. Make sure that your friends, coworkers and family know how dangerous this initiative will be and tell them not to sign either.
- Political campaigns are very expensive, especially here in California. It takes money to make a difference. We can assist in this by joining AFSCME PEOPLE (Public Employees Organized to Promote Legislative Equality). The big corporations and political action groups already raise millions for their side of campaigns like this one, and we can raise a little money as well. For as little as \$4.20 a month, we can do our part. Do you think that \$50 a year is too much to pay to keep thousands of pension dollars for us and our families and for our retirement security? Join PEOPLE today! You can access PEOPLE applications on this website, or you can give us a call at 686-6633 and we'll bring one out to you.

We've included a letter from our attorneys about the elements of Chuck Reed's initiative and what it will do to us. If you have any questions, let us know so we can help clarify the facts for you. Most of the time when we tell you about scary things coming down the road at us, they aren't really a direct threat to us. Make no mistake about this one, though...it's headed right at us and if it passes we're gonna get hurt bad. Help yourselves and your families keep the promise of a decent retirement. Say NO to Chuck Reed. Say NO to those who want to do away with the middle class that has kept our country strong. And help us help you do it!