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By Executive Director Terry B. Cox

Our Fire service is being attacked from within. These attacks include the erosion of our state and federal constitutional protections. In Illinois, using public pensions as a diversion is like the political community has suddenly after 40 years of manipulation of public funds, awoke to the realization that they have been found out.

As true politicians instead of admitting the poor judgment of "Kicking the Can Forward" and start to fix their wrong doings, they chose to launch a public relations campaign of misinformation; they have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars that could have gone a long way to start the repair of their shortages and mistakes of the past.

Enjoying the public support of the citizens of their communities and the reputation, honesty and integrity of the past, these community leaders were able to manipulate the media to buy in to this misinformation. Article after article have been written through out this state misguiding the public in to believing that the structure of the Downstate Pension Funds were the cause of the underfunding of these funds.

In addition they accused the General Assembly of passing a series of unfunded mandates that have required the municipalities to absorb an unfair percentage of the costs associated with the operational ability of the funds to be sustained over a long time. When in fact, the associations representing the city governments were represented at the committee meetings as these were voted into public law. Their testimony, if any, was not compelling and the laws passed. The changes were reviewed for economic impact and if an impact was found that

affected the sustainability, of the fund there was a raise in the employee contributions to cover the future needs.

In addition "Spiking" is used as a way for cities to buy out employees and pass the cost on to the pension fund. Then they contend that the funds are misused for this purpose. The cities are the employers, the city administration hires, fires, and is responsible for the day to day operation of the city, the citizens enjoy the right to believe that these people are going to do what is in their best interest.

History has shown that this approach was sound, however times have changed. It is time for the management of our cities to return to the honest approach of running the government. When you or your predecessors make a commitment, you need to meet that commitment and not avoid it or manipulate it so other pet projects can be funded with the funds that have already been committed.

These opponents of fire and police pension funds keep manipulating the system in an effort to justify the means to pay for new projects. Early buy outs, spiking, and underfunding only increase the underfunding of these funds. Maybe the administrators should learn to say "No", after all that is their job.