

# THE ANNUITANT

A PUBLICATION OF THE SIUC CARBONDALE ANNUITANTS ASSOCIATION

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AUGUST 2015

## FALL GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING SCHEDULED SEPTEMBER 17

The SIUC Annuitants Association Fall General Meeting will be held Thursday, September 17, 2015, at 4:30 p.m. in the Law School Auditorium. The speaker for the meeting will be W. Bryan Lewis, Executive Director of the State Universities Retirement System.

The meeting has been scheduled for this time period so that current employees, who are SURS annuitants, will be able to attend without using leave time or seeking permission to be away from work. The SIUC Annuitants Association is working to grow its membership of current employees. SUAA has had success in pension and benefits battles, but seeks to grow its membership of current employees as well as SIUC retirees! Lewis will review SURS programs, membership, demographics and challenges.

Mr. Lewis is relatively new to Illinois as he was named SURS Executive Director in March 2015, and his tenure began April 6. "Mr. Lewis has more than 15 years of experience in institutional investments and financial management," said Lindsay Anderson, SURS Board of Trustees chairperson. "His broad experience and in-depth knowledge will be a true asset to the System in the years to come as we strive to secure and deliver the retirement benefits promised to our members."

Lewis previously served as the Chief Operating Officer for the Investment Management Division of the North Carolina Department of State Treasurer. He was responsible for the management, investment and operational strategy, legislative policy, and regulatory compliance of the North Carolina Retirement Systems' defined-benefits plans. The plans manage more than \$90 billion in assets for 850,000 participants. He had been with the NC State Treasurer since 2009. Prior to 2009, Lewis served as Deputy Director - Citi Office of Financial Education, Citigroup Inc. He also held positions with CUNA Mutual Group and Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Inc.

Lewis is a graduate of the University of Maryland with a bachelor's degree in agricultural and resource economics. He obtained his master's degree in business administration, finance – investments from the University of Miami.

All SIUC annuitants—working and retired—are cordially invited to attend. Light refreshments will be served following the meeting.



W. BRYAN LEWIS  
Executive Director of the SURS

## EMERITUS FACULTY ORGANIZATION TO MEET SEPTEMBER 17

~ BILL WRIGHT

The Emeritus Faculty Organization will hold its annual Fall meeting on Thursday, September 17, at 3:30 p.m. in the Lesar Law Building, Room 102. (Note the unusual time and location.) Our speaker will be Mr. James T. "Tommy" Bell, the new Director of Intercollegiate Athletics at SIUC Carbondale.

Mr. Bell served as Director of Athletics at Western Illinois University from 2013 to 2015, where he was responsible for 20 NCAA Division 1 sports programs in two conferences, before coming to SIUC. His accomplishments included developing a master athletics facility plan, initiating a stadium renovation project, and establishing a corporate sponsorship program.

From 2007 to 2013, he served as Director of Intercollegiate Athletics, Recreation, and Intramurals for Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne. While there, he launched a branding campaign, expanded donor relations, and served as the athletics consultant for a \$42 million addition to the Gates Athletics Center.

Mr. Bell was associate director of institutional advancement for Saluki athletics from 2001 to 2007. While at SIUC in an athletics fundraising role, he developed and implemented the Saluki Athletic Scholarship Fund and oversaw the athletics program's first comprehensive fundraising campaign.

Bell holds a master's degree in health and physical education from Radford University, a bachelor's degree in physical education from Virginia Tech, and an associate of arts degree from Ferrum College in Virginia.

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## PRESS TIME PENSION UPDATE

On July 27 Attorney General Lisa Madigan filed a petition formally asking U.S. Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan for more time to consider asking the high court to review recent local court decisions requiring full payment of public employee pensions. The petition asks for a 35-day extension to file a potential writ of certiorari, seeking review of a unanimous Illinois Supreme Court decision in May that tossed out legislation reforming state employee pensions because it violated provisions of the Illinois Constitution. Without the extension, the state would need to file any petition for review of the case early in August.



**Douglas Bedient, President**  
SIUC Annuitants Association

## *A message from the president*

### **Maintaining Our Momentum!**

Did you smile when your health insurance premium refund arrived in June 2015? Did you do something out of the ordinary since you had extra funds from months of premium payments? Maybe the check felt like a windfall or a winning lottery ticket?

Did you notice that your health insurance premiums at least doubled in July and August 2014 compared with July 1, 2013-December 1, 2013?

Did you notice the Legal Fee deduction in your refund check?

These three events have a common catalyst! SUAA stepped up and defended the rights of SURS annuitants! Until SUAA acted, SURS annuitants were not represented. The State Employee Retirement System (SERS) and unionized employees were represented classes. If there had been no SUAA legal action the avenue for return of the insurance premiums was very

tentative. The Maag suit included all retirees, but deductions would have continued, moneys would not have been segregated, and attorney fees would have been paid from the funds. SUAA was the only team to represent SURS annuitants! If SUAA had not filed its suit, further legal action would have been required in the Court of Claims. Do you believe more legal action would have happened without additional legal fees?

If you noticed your health insurance premium doubled on July 1, 2014 that was because by emergency rule the State doubled the amount of deductions. The increase lasted two months. Since the IL Supreme Court had reversed a lower court decision and supported that health insurance was a protected benefit, SUAA contacted Central Management Services, and the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules of the General Assembly (JCAR) to stop the premium deductions. Only SUAA acted to end these deductions. The last premium was taken from the September 1, 2014 checks.

Legal fees were another case where SUAA acted on the behalf of all SURS retirees. The SERS legal team wanted 10% of \$30 million. Maag and McDonal wanted a percentage of everything--\$60 million. SUAA challenged the idea of a percentage fee. The Court decided it would award fees based on a lodestar (rate x time). Time records revealed some outrageous proceedings. Plaintiffs requested \$9,000,000. SUAA suggested \$1,442,216.25. The Court awarded \$1,494,300. That was 3.5% more than SUAA's suggestion and 2.37% of what other attorneys demanded. The deduction on your statement would have been much greater without SUAA's court action.

Have you thought about your 2015 3% cost of living adjustment when you see a deposit was made or you receive your SURS check each month?

SUAA again went to court to protect SURS retirees when Public Act 98-599 (a/k/a Senate Bill 1) was enacted. Court action was required because SURS members differ from other state employees. SURS offers the Money Purchase Plan as well as Traditional Defined Benefit, Portable, and Self Managed plans. SB 1 threatened to take away the Money Purchase Formula if persons did not retire immediately. SUAA determined it needed to move for an injunction. Other retiree groups objected to the motion and one group was slow to file a motion. On May 14, 2014 the Court entered an injunction barring the State from implementing the law.

We learned about various approaches retiree groups took to fight SB 1. Suffice it to say that SUAA's suit that stressed contract law as well as the pension clause was important in winning the court battle.

Aaron Maduff who served as SUAA's lead lawyer summarized SUAA progress:

***SUAA has become a major voice on pensions.***

***SUAA has proved that it can and will fight a constitutional legal battle.***

***SUAA has proven it can mobilize plaintiffs and declarants to support cases and motions for injunctions.***

***SUAA is going to have to be consulted in the future.***

Mr. Maduff titled his presentation at SUAA's Annual Meeting, "Pension Wars: Round 1 to SUAA." Note there was no mention of a knockout! We dare not rest and assume that the future of our pensions and benefits is secure.

Court battles are very expensive. SUAA has around 17,000 members. Imagine what we could achieve and influence if we could enroll more SURS annuitants as members! In March 2015 SURS had 83,391 active and 81,106 inactive participants. Benefit recipients totaled 59,155. We need our members to maintain their own memberships and help us reach other working and retired SURS annuitants so we can better prepare for the next rounds of IL pension battles. This newsletter includes an application that we hope you will share with your contacts who are not members of SUAA.

We have the means to influence policy and legislation. And this process can help avert costly court battles. SUAAAction educates candidates about our viewpoints on pensions and benefits. One of our members, Carolyn Donow, leads SUAAAction. Sign up to help her influence our local candidates and elected officials as well as others across the state.

SUAA has the Legal Fund that enabled the court actions that protected our pensions and benefits and also defeated an amendment to the Illinois Constitution. If you have not sent a portion of your health care premiums to SUAA's Legal Fund I hope you will. Let's be financially positioned so SUAA can move expeditiously when legal remedies are required!

This is a great time to be a SUAA member. Our organization is on a winning streak. With your support in various ways the momentum can continue and build. Join in as a member, a contributor, and participant in our various programs, committees, and activities. We welcome your ideas for enhancing our effectiveness. Thanks for your support and the encouragement many of you provide.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Douglas Bedient".

# SUAA Capital Points from Springfield

SUAA LEGAL FUND: HELP US HELP YOU!

~ Bruce C. Appleby, President

In order to protect your pension and benefits from being taken from you, SUAA started a Legal Fund in order to hire the lawyers we needed.

We can all testify to the effectiveness of this move. SUAA provided the leadership and the legal counsel that proved victorious.

The Illinois Supreme Court declared that withholding health insurance costs from the pensions of University retirees is unconstitutional. You received a refund on that money that had been taken from your pension for over a year.

Later, the Illinois Supreme Court declared that the pension revisions voted in by the legislature and approved by then-Governor Quinn were unconstitutional. (The decision by the Supreme Court is available at the SUAA website: [suaa.org](http://suaa.org). If you haven't read it, I guarantee you would find the decision reaffirming of our position as pensioners of the state.)

And don't forget that in 2013, we were successful in getting the voters of the state to vote down a constitutional amendment that would have removed the power of Article 13, Section 5 of the Illinois Constitution, which states that pensions and benefits cannot be impaired or reduced.

We—SUAA—now come to you to ask you to donate to the Legal Fund. The fight is not over. Although as I write, the legislature has done nothing as far as this year's budget and no legislation has moved that would have an effect on our pensions and benefits, we cannot afford to sit back and think the war is over. There is just an unannounced cease-fire.

I predict there will be a constitutional amendment on the ballot in November of 2016 that will reduce and impair our pensions and benefits. The terminology of the bill won't, of course, state that that is its goal. But beware!

We must be ready for the battle that will occur when this happens. That is why the Legal Fund must grow.

Thus far, we have collected and spent well over \$600,000 on the Legal Fund. 36% of the 16,000+ membership of SUAA have donated these funds. Only 34% of our SIUC membership have donated. So you can compare and see where SIUC stands in relationship to other university chapters of SUAA, I offer the following graph.

| <u>INSTITUTION/CHAPTER</u> | <u>AMOUNT DONATED</u> | <u>PERCENTAGE DONATING</u> |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| UIUC                       | \$118,547             | 48                         |
| UIC                        | 73,780                | 41                         |
| NIU                        | 59,812                | 32                         |
| ISU                        | 40,948                | 32                         |
| SIUC                       | 32,027                | 34                         |
| SIUE                       | 30,632                | 52                         |

These are the largest donors. A chart considering just membership would have the same order. (I was very happy to see how the SIUE chapter has grown and how active it has become.) Many of the community college chapters donated over \$20,000.

The lawyers we were able to hire and who represented us over the last year have been outstanding. They provided leadership to all the other groups that had the same interest: protecting the pensions and benefits of state employees. Our lawyers, along with our executive director, Linda Brookhart, have provided us with the best possible service and help during this time.

We need to be ready to face the next attempt to impair our pensions and benefits. And when I say "our," I refer more to those still working than those of us already retired. The Supreme Court decisions will clue the politicians that they can't touch those already retired. But, as the latest announcement from Governor Rauner seems to say, "we can get around all the constitutional stuff." Note that his suggested changes in the pension systems refer to altering the pension benefits of those still working.

Several chapters used the return of the insurance money as a catalyst for the Legal Fund. This was built around my idea of "Donate 25% of the return you got. Were it not for the Legal Fund, you wouldn't be receiving this money." I repeat that challenge to all who are a part of the State Universities Retirement System (SURS).

Donate to the Legal Fund of SUAA. Protect your pensions and benefits. Help us help you. Send your donation to SUAA Legal Fund, 217 E. Monroe, Suite 100 Springfield, IL 62701.

## CONTACTS FOR LOCAL STATE LEGISLATORS

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## MEMBERSHIP IN SIUC ANNUITANTS ASSOCIATION

As of July 7, our chapter had 783 members. While this number is up by 5 since the end of March, we must increase our membership. In fact, SIUC's Board has set a goal of 801 members by the end of December 2015. Why 801? According to the SUAA bylaws, "each active chapter shall be entitled to a minimum of two directors. Chapters with more than 400 members shall be entitled to an additional director for each subsequent 400 members or portion thereof (i.e., 401 members = 3 directors, 801 members = 4 directors, etc.). The number of directors to which a chapter is entitled will be determined by the number of chapter members on December 31. Meeting our goal of 801 members by the end of this year will give us an additional director to serve on the SUAA Board of Directors (and thus increase SIUC's visibility with the state organization). This state organization sets policy, defines goals and priorities, and has responsibility for the direction of the Association.

It is important that every SIUC retiree and current employee join our organization. **SUAA is the only advocacy organization that focuses solely on preserving pension and healthcare benefits for the public universities and community college employees—both active and retirees—their spouses, survivors, and SURS annuitants who live out of state.**

SUAA membership provides updates on local and state issues focused on pension and healthcare benefits. For example, SUAA's lawyer, Aaron Maduff, led the successful 2015 fight to have Public Act 98-599 (which would have reduced pension rights) declared unconstitutional.

Executive Director of SUAA, Linda Brookhart explained: "the underfunding of pension benefits has a long history that goes back well before the pension protection clause was adopted. The clause was intended to apply pressure on the legislature to meet its financial obligations to fund retirement benefits for employees who have spent their lives working for the state. That the state insisted on pursuing its policy of under-funding in the 44 years since the clause was adopted cannot now serve as an excuse for the state to renege on its obligation to pay pensions."

SUAA lawyers must continue to work to meet the challenges that face SURS annuitants. An increase in our numbers will help make that possible.

**An application for SUAA membership is enclosed in this newsletter.** Please give it to someone who is either working or retired but has not yet joined SUAA. **Membership helps all of us protect our contractual rights.**

Contact me personally for additional information.

Thyra Russell, Membership Chair  
457-7554 or [trussell@siu.edu](mailto:trussell@siu.edu)

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## SUAACTION

Thank you to all who have contributed thus far to SUAAction, our Political Action Committee. With these funds, we can support those political candidates who share the views of the members of the State Universities Annuitants Association. Our fiscal year ends in December, so there is still time to contribute— <http://suaa.org/ContributeToAction.php> or mail a check to SUAA, 217 Monroe, Suite 100, Springfield, IL 62701.

The SUAAction Executive Board will have a training session for all chapter SUAAction chairs and SUAA presidents in Normal, Illinois on September 1. The main purpose of the training will be to get all chapters engaged in political activities—attending local fund raisers (paid for by the state-level SUAAction Committee), and meeting with our local legislators. Telling our concerns and stories on a face-to-face basis is a big deal to candidates and elected officials. They do listen and they do care when we take time to talk with them or write to them.

Recently I met with our newest state legislator, Representative Terri Bryant, at the Carbondale Civic Center. At our meeting we discussed the need for more money for higher education, and I gave her a SUAA brochure and described our purpose. Through the years and at our SIUC Annuitants Association meetings, we have had many contacts with our other state legislators. Those contacts need to continue, and I urge all of you to carry our message to all of them.

Carolyn Donow, SIUC  
Vice Chair, SUAAction Board of Directors

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

AUGUST 24 -28 - BOOKSTORE GREETERS - UNIVERSITY BOOKSTORE, SIUC STUDENT CENTER

AUGUST 24 - 25 - FALL SEMESTER SUAA BLOOD DRIVE, 10 A.M. - 2 P.M., SIUC STUDENT CENTER

SEPTEMBER 17 - EMERITUS FACULTY MEETING - 3:30 P.M., LESAR LAW SCHOOL, ROOM 102

SEPTEMBER 17 - FALL GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING - 4:30 P.M. - HIRAM LESAR LAW SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

OCTOBER 23 - 24 - SIUC HOMECOMING WEEKEND WITH HOMECOMING GAME AGAINST YOUNGSTOWN STATE - 6 P.M., OCT. 24

# Chapter happenings

## **BLOOD DRIVE**

~Mary Mantovani

The Fall Semester Blood Drive will be held on Monday, August 24th, and Tuesday, August 25th, 2015, in the Student Center. There will be 4 shifts to volunteer for on those two days: 10 a.m.-noon and noon-2 p.m. each day. To volunteer, contact Holly Rick in Human Resources at 618-453-6689 or hrick@siu.edu by August 13.

Work a shift at the Book Store then come do a shift at the Blood Drive. Can't work? Donate!

## **GOLF**

~KEITH McQUARRIE

The annual Spring Golf Outing was held at the Crab Orchard Golf Club course on Monday, May 3, 2015. We had 2 teams participate this time. (We really wish more people would come and join us in this fun event. We play in 'scramble' format, and this

time the teams ended in a tie at 1 over par, 73. While we had a longest putt contest, no one made a putt they were proud enough to claim. For the 'closest to pin contest, none of the players managed to put their first shot on the green. Participants were the team of

Ruth Bernhardt, Elaine Vitello, Judy Rawls and Kay Brechtelsbauer, and the team of Ron Mahoney, Anne Johnson, Fred Isberner and Keith McQuarrie. After the round of golf, participants enjoyed a relaxing lunch in the clubhouse.

The Fall 2015 Golf Scramble will likely be scheduled for a Monday in early September. You can watch the EAA website for details or you can email me at keithmcq@siu.edu and I will send you a note when our date and course are set. Please make plans to join us for a fun and relaxing day of golf. Please spread the word and encourage others to field a team – we always have a great time!

Late changes or updates will be posted on the EAA web page: <http://eaa.siu.edu/>

**SUAA MEMBERS – Please help make our VOICE in Springfield stronger. Every new member raises the VOLUME!**

**RECRUIT A NEW MEMBER.**

*The Annuitant* newsletter is published three times a year by the SIU Carbondale Annuitants Association and the Department of Human Resources, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

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## **SOCIAL**

~Mike Hanes

Twenty-five members of the SIU Carbondale Annuitants Association attended a dinner theater activity sponsored by the association, on Friday evening, June 26. The group first met in the WSIU-TV studio, just down the hall from the McLeod Theater, for wine and a delicious dinner catered by Heartland Catering. The menu featured Chicken Cordon Bleu and Broiled Salmon with Dill Sauce, salad, side dishes and Cherry Cheese Cake.

After dinner it was just a short walk to our seats in McLeod for a wonderful evening of adventure on the Mississippi with Roger Miller's Broadway musical Big River, based on Twain's The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. The show featured an extremely talented cast of singer-actor-dancers, all members of the McLeod Summer Playhouse company, from around the country, as well as a number of students from SIU. The singing was wonderful and the cast was very energetic, and talented. The setting was most effective. The entire production was very professional and really pleased the crowd. Particular thanks goes to Vincent Rhomberg, Director of Marketing for the Department of Theater, for all of his assistance in arranging our dinner and theater tickets.

Watch the newsletter, our website and your email for other SUAA sponsored events in the upcoming year.

## **SCHOLARSHIP**

~Imogene Beckemeyer

The Carbondale Annuitants Association awarded three scholarships of \$1000 each for the SIUC 2015-16 academic year. The three students who received the awards are: Brenda Krutsinger, majoring in Special Education/Elementary Education; Shelby Orr, an Architectural Studies major; and, Kacy Murphy, majoring in Biological Science.

The Scholarship Committee members were David Koch, Brenda Gilbert, Robert Swenson and Imogene Beckemeyer.

SIDE NOTE: The SIUC graduating class of 1965 will be honored at this year's homecoming weekend activities taking place October 23-24. Among those activities will be the 50th Class Reunion of the Class of 1965 and induction into the Half Century Club.

## **We Are All In This Together**

**Go to SUAA.ORG to keep informed on current state-wide efforts and legislative actions being conducted to protect your pension and benefits.**

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## *Spotlighting Retiree Jim Martin & Life is Good in Southern Illinois*

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Since Jim Martin's retirement from the Department of Information Technology and Computing Affairs several years ago, he has been supplying his Facebook friends with a world of information of another nature...to be specific, Mother Nature and her critters who reside here in Southern Illinois. Jim, a former business teacher and computer analyst, has the unique ability to capture many of Mother Nature's wondrous moments out in the field with his camera and to add an informative commentary to each of his posts. The lessons that we can learn from the observation of Mother Nature and her critters are well illustrated by Jim, his camera, and his pen.

TEAM WORK (As written 6/26/2015 by Jim Martin)

While walking out the kitchen door early this morning... the sky was appearing very ominous... I noticed the darkened clouds were formed in various shapes and the smoothened grayish backgrounds really made me wonder what was going to happen with regard to the weather. My buddy and I were headed down to the Big Muddy River swamp area... "The Bottoms" as it is often referred to... where the boundaries of Jackson and Union Counties collide... here in Southern Illinois... where the Big Muddy River empties its waters and debris into the Mighty Mississippi.

Because of all the rain and flooding that we are currently experiencing here in Southern Illinois... many of the back roads are under water now... also a few of the main hard-roads are impassable... so it was apparent we would have to modify our usual observation pathways this day... because most all of our foot-trails were under water in some form or fashion... much of the land along the rivers between rural Sand Ridge and Grand Tower, Illinois is now under water... many of the farm fields that have corn and soybeans planted in them now appear to be large lakes as they are flooded... which makes it somewhat tougher on some of the wildlife this time of year while they are trying to raise their young... but, such is Nature... and the strong will continue to survive in their changing environments.

On this day we observed many of Mother Nature's critters: snakes... rabbits... turtles... many species of birds... every type of biting insect imaginable; mosquitoes, deerflies, horseflies... etc... but, this image we are looking at now... was the most intriguing sight we saw... it is a Whitetail Doe with a fawn... and a female Cowbird... we observed their actions for 2 or 3 minutes before they parted-ways.

We first noticed the Deer... with her fawn hidden out of sight... and then a group of Cowbirds came flying by... one of the female birds dropped down and used the deer's back as a landing strip... If one has ever observed Whitetail deer up close and personal... figuratively speaking... one knows that deer are walking magnets for all types of insects... from flies, ticks, etc... the cowbird started pacing back and forth on the deer's back... starting at the deer's tail and proceeding to its neck... and then back to its tail... and back again... using a path usually along the deer's backbone area... and the two seemed to be in mutual agreement... this is a good thing happening... the bird was catching and eating insects... I could almost image hearing the deer talk to the bird... saying... "I appreciate your help buddy; those insects are literally driving me crazy."

While heading home this day... I pondered what we had observed with the bird and deer, two critters, one by land and one by air... different as night and day... coming together and utilizing their environments to help each other... the bird getting a meal of insects that were attracted to the deer... the deer getting some relief from insects that were driving her nuts... actions that were improving the environments for each critter... a meal and fewer insects made it mutually better for both critters involved in their encounter. *Life is good.*



As viewed 7/3/2015...



These two little fawns we see here were very active this morning... we observed them for several minutes... the key to our observation was location, location, location... plus, being elevated above them... and being downwind of them and their mother... that's right... even though one cannot see their Mother in this image... she is in the edge of the woods out of sight watching the show as her little ones learn about their environments... as perceived ... on their own.



It was so interesting and intriguing to watch the fawns come out of the woods... and frolic along this area of open ground... sometimes running at high speeds... full bore ahead... and then stopping on the proverbial dime... quite a sight to see here in The Bottoms of Southern Illinois... as they exercise and learn from their actions... it gave me pause... and somehow helped recharge my own batteries of life... it's one of the true feelings of impact that Nature can stimulate throughout her various species... as they act and react in close proximity... I do not fully understand why... but, it does... most often as we observe young critters in their wild environments. *Life is good.*

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As viewed 7/24/2015

As my wife, Elsie, and I sit here watching this magical parade of life on this hot humid evening here in rural Jackson County Southern Illinois... the sun had already sunk into the western horizon... darkness was beginning to set-in on this side of the earth and Mother Nature was telling some of her critters it was time to hit-the-sack... and others... it was time to get-up and roam in the darkness... this time of day in summertime is productive and interesting for observing Nature's creatures... because most of them are either going to their temporary bedding areas for the night... while others are getting up out of their beds and starting to perform their nightly routines... so, one often gets to view the critters' activities from both unique staging areas.

As we intensely watched this Whitetail Doe maneuver her three small spotted fawns along a pond's edge toward a woodlot... it was apparent that she was somewhat nervous about the four eyes that were observing all of their activities... so, we only got to observe this vision for less than two minutes... this particular encounter is one of those "Once in a Lifetime" opportunities that we often talk about... and we are sharing it together as the doe leads her fawns into the woods... which makes this Nature encounter much sweeter for me... because sharing the beauty of Nature is dear to my heart. *Life is good.*



*Photos by Jim Martin*

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## The SUAA Executive Director's Report to the Board of Directors

- Doug Bedient

Linda Brookhart presented her report to the Annual Meeting of the SUAA Board of Directors in June. I have summarized some of the points that I think may be useful for members to ponder as we watch the governor and legislature deal with the budget, changes that are suggested to improve Illinois, and watch the various court proceedings.

Brookhart mentioned that the 50% tuition waiver was addressed. Movement is occurring to have SURS and Teachers Retirement System investigate the Tier 2 effects.

SUAA is working to put the higher education legislative caucus together again. She reported that the hearing regarding Amtrak reductions was one of the best sessions she has attended. But action was not taken concerning the large reductions proposed by Governor Rauner.

SUAA is ready to put its lobbyists to work once it becomes clear what SUAA will be advocating or opposing. She reminded us that there needs to be movement in the legislature before one can promote or resist.

Brookhart reported that the College Insurance Program was 10 months behind in its claims payments. FY16 unpaid claims will be 14 months behind.

Linda mentioned that annuitants need to be mindful of encroachment. SB1 encroached on pensions and benefits. SUAA focused on a lawsuit to block SB1. But going to court is very expensive. Health insurance benefits are being encroached as co-pays, deductibles and out of pocket expenses grow. She called for SUAA directors to work together to build involvement and action in the local chapters. She suggested that repeated contacts with legislators are needed. One phone call or one letter is a start! But repeated contacts with legislators and policy makers help make our case.

Brookhart also believes a Constitutional Amendment, which would be voted on in November 2016, is being prepared to lay grounds for pension and benefit reforms. She predicted very short advance notice when it is introduced. Now is the time for us to be building networks so we annuitants respond to the amendment and protect the benefits and pensions we were promised, and for which we paid our shares without any holidays.

If you do not receive the SUAA Mini-briefings, go to [www.suaa.org](http://www.suaa.org) and register for them. You will receive current information and guidance as the budget battles continue.



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202109

**MEMBERSHIP MATTERS**

**If you are associated with SIU Carbondale...**

You should join the State Universities Annuitants Association. SUAA serves all participants and beneficiaries of the State Universities Retirement System (SURS). SUAA is the only advocacy organization focusing solely on preserving pension and healthcare benefits for current employees and retirees of public universities and community colleges. It is important that everyone—retired and current employees, spouses, and survivors—become a member of SUAA. The annual fee is \$39.

**Ways to join:**

- Go to [www.suaa.org](http://www.suaa.org) and click on “Join Now.”
- Go to the Annuitants Association website: [annuitants.siu.edu](http://annuitants.siu.edu) and click on “Membership Information.” Payment options include automatic dues deduction, annual payment by check, or automatic payroll deduction (current employees only). Automatic dues deduction is encouraged because it eliminates the need to be contacted annually by SUAA.
- Call the SUAA Office at 217-523-4040

To those who are already members of SUAA we thank you. To those who have not yet joined, please consider joining today. We need to protect our pension and benefits.

Thyra Russell  
 SIU Carbondale-AA Membership Chair  
 457-7554 or [trussell@siu.edu](mailto:trussell@siu.edu)

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