

FLORIDA PUBLIC PENSION TRUSTEES ASSOCIATION



NEWS STORIES FOR JANUARY 2012 ON FLORIDA PENSION ISSUES

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[Seminole supports fire pension changes](#)

By Bob McClure, Tampa Bay Newspaper Weekly, January 31, 2012

The city of Seminole has joined an increasing effort by the Florida League of Cities to send a nonbinding message to the Florida Legislature concerning firefighter pension reforms. City councilors voted 5-1 on Jan. 24 to pass a resolution asking state lawmakers to consider removing mandates that establish minimum standards for firefighter pensions, remove the requirements for additional pension benefits and allow the city to use insurance premium tax revenues to pay for pension benefits. The resolution also calls for legislators to prohibit Florida Division of Retirement from imposing administrative policies as they relate to disability presumptions that result in increased cost to city taxpayers.

EDITOR'S NOTE: There were numerous stories in the media detailing local governments passing similar resolutions as the one above.

[Fire pension board may sue city](#)

By Wayne Ayers, Tampa Bay Newspaper Weekly, January 11, 2012

Frustrated by a continued failure to resolve pension issues, the Belleair Bluffs fire pension board decided to hire an attorney and will likely pursue legal action against the city. State statute says it is up to the pension board, not the city, to determine how pension payments will be made, Langere said. When the city decided in 2009 to close its fire department and contract for fire services from Largo, the Bluffs firefighters' pension program had to be closed out. Since that time, the fire pension board and the city have been unable to reach a settlement, fighting primarily over annuity payments to senior firefighters.

[Firefighters, governor part of Palm Beach County's Tallahassee lobbying swing](#)

By Andy Reid, Sun-Sentinel, January 11, 2012

Firefighters and the governor are adding some extra attention to Palm Beach County's annual lobbying push in Tallahassee. Palm Beach County government and business leaders have converged on Tallahassee for a lobbying swing intended draw the Florida Legislature's attention to local issues. In addition to county commissioners and other community representatives, the county's contingent includes about 40 firefighters who are in town to tour the Capitol and join local officials on their lobbying visits. With government employee pensions still part of budget-cutting debates, firefighters joining the Palm Beach County lobbying trip can deliver in-person reminders to lawmakers of some of those affected by decisions in Tallahassee.

Union: Vote a foregone conclusion; hearing wouldn't 'make a difference'

By [William Kelly](#), Palm Beach Post, January 19, 2012

A lawyer representing the police officers' union delivered a stinging rebuttal to Town Manager Peter Elwell's assertion that the town can no longer afford generous pension benefits for its police officers.

"I take offense at the point that we appear to be pigs at the trough," Anthony M. Livoti Jr., general counsel for the Florida State Fraternal Order of Police. Livoti and Elwell argued for the union and town, respectively, at a public hearing to resolve an impasse in labor contract negotiations. About 70 people, many of them police officers, attended the morning session of the hearing. Livoti said he also was offended at the notion that police officers' pension benefits should be considered along with those of firefighters and general employees. "Police work is a profession," he said. "Safety is the priority of any government. Safety has a price. If you want to continue to attract professional people to provide you with that safety, it has a cost." Elwell contended the town can no longer afford its pension plans for police, firefighters and general employees without deep cuts. He blamed increases in employee salaries and benefit levels, poor market investment returns, and declining property values and tax revenue for putting the town on a track toward deficit spending.

Work Now to Fix Fla. Pension System

By ROBERT McClure, Op-Ed, The Ledger, January 24, 2012

We have started another year, and another legislative session, but Florida is still battling the same issue — unsustainable government pensions. Lawmakers must tackle the challenge of balancing the state budget and ensuring that taxpayers are not left to bear the burden of flawed systems. By simply switching the default option for new state government hires to a defined-contribution plan instead of the current defined-benefit plan, we can alleviate costs to the employee, as well as the state. The retirement system for the state of Florida was designed to benefit employees and help them plan for their futures. In its current state, the FRS may not provide the benefits that it was created to supply and will become a financial nightmare for the next generation of Floridians. Let's not let our children's future be haunted by the unfinished business of pension reform. We should encourage lawmakers to continue to create a better state retirement system for all, one that the local governments can emulate, state employees can trust, and taxpayers can sustain.

Editorial: Florida should eliminate privileged classes in state health insurance, retirement plans

Editorial, Treasure Coast Palm, January 11, 2012

There is a gross inequity in Florida government — one that needs to be corrected during the 2012 Legislature. What is the inequity? Elected officials, including the governor, Cabinet members and state lawmakers, receive taxpayer-funded health insurance and retirement benefits that dwarf those of rank-and-file state workers. In fact, the benefits are so generous they fuel the perception that those in positions of authority — i.e. who craft state laws — have done so in this case to line their own pockets. Surely not. Florida taxpayers should be outraged they are being asked to subsidize health insurance premiums for special classes of state officials — many of whom (at least in the case of legislators) have second jobs and don't need a subsidy to afford quality health insurance. There's more. All state employees — top to bottom — contribute 3 percent of salary to their pensions in the Florida Retirement System, something that began last year. However, the "upper class" in state government — i.e. lawmakers, judges, Cabinet members and so on — get a much more generous "match" than regular state employees.