

Momentum builds for Senate's compromise pension bill

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SPRINGFIELD - Momentum is building for the compromise pension bill introduced by Senators Connelly and Tracy to make statewide changes to Illinois' pension system, while providing Chicago Public Schools \$215 million to close its budget deficit for one year. Here is what people are saying:

[Senate Republican Leader Christine Radogno](#)

“These proposals can be considered building blocks toward a comprehensive solution. Working together on those issues where there is agreement, such as pension reform, may help generate some momentum toward our ultimate goal of a balanced, bipartisan budget for Illinois,” said Radogno.

Deputy Senate Republican Leader Bill Brady

“Our pension systems have been chronically underfunded for years and, frankly, it’s left us with quite a mess. It’s time we tackle this issue and get some real reforms in place.

“This plan will save \$1 billion now, and another billion down the road. That’s a good deal for the people of Illinois.

“The reforms contained in this package have received bipartisan support in the past, and as we continue to discuss a more comprehensive budget solution, I hope my colleagues on the other side of the aisle can join us to get them passed now to offer some much needed relief to the taxpayers of Illinois.”

Senator Michael Connelly

“The so-called 'Grand Bargain' is in a holding pattern while we wait for Democrats to agree to freeze property taxes, make Illinois more competitive and cut spending to balance the budget.

“But that shouldn't prevent us from moving forward on areas where we agree, including pension reform. Republicans want pension reform that helps the whole state save money while the mayor of Chicago is asking for pension assistance to solve his own pension crisis. We have bills already filed and supported by Senate Democrats that we can move right now to solve both issues. We should honor the agreement reached last summer, and hopefully moving a pension deal now will spark momentum toward a larger budget deal as well.”

Senator Jil Tracy

“Time is of the essence. We feel the urgency to get these bills moving forward.

“We want to show good faith that we, as Republicans, want to move this process forward. We are willing to meet on some things that we may not have supported in the past. We are trying to find common ground.”

Chicago Tribune Editorial Board

“One way to revive the patient: Rauner suggested passing Cullerton's pension changes that have been part of the grand compromise along with a \$215 million payment for Chicago teachers' pensions.

“Well, lawmakers, here's your chance. Swallow hard, work together and get it done.

“Don't give up, senators. Keep talking. The condition of the state continues to worsen at an alarming rate. There is no time for grudges.”

Background

SB 2172 and SB 2173 combine the pension bill of the Senate “Grand Bargain” (SB 16) with the bill passed in the previous General Assembly (SB 2822) that would provide CPS a one-time payment of \$215 million to close its budget deficit. This package could likely win bipartisan support considering that SB 16 came within four votes of passage and SB 2822 passed both chambers of the General Assembly last summer.