

July 29, 2016

To the Honorable Members of
The Illinois Senate,
99th General Assembly:

Today I veto Senate Bill 2439, which amends the Illinois Pension Code to impose additional pension liability for police and firefighters on local governments, despite a local referendum rejecting such an expansion. It is identical to Senate Bill 763, which I vetoed last year.

Public safety workers deserve the right to earn good pension benefits. However, current law already provides a mechanism by which a municipality can provide pension benefits to police officers and firefighters. Benefits are mandatory in municipalities with the population of at least 5,000 people and can be created by referendum in those with fewer than 5,000 residents. Thus, in smaller municipalities, the decision rests directly with the people who will have to pay for additional benefits through higher property and other taxes.

This veto is necessary because Senate Bill 2439 would allow municipalities an end-run around local referendum results. If this legislation becomes law, a municipality could impose new pension obligations by a resolution of its governing body even if residents overwhelmingly reject the same by referendum. At a time when local governments in Illinois are struggling to make ends meet, we should not stifle direct democracy by permitting local governing bodies to ignore taxpayer's wishes.

Therefore, pursuant to Section 9(b) of Article IV of the Illinois Constitution of 1970, I hereby return Senate Bill 2439 entitled "AN ACT concerning public employee benefits", with the foregoing objections, vetoed in its entirety.

Sincerely,

Bruce Rauner

GOVERNOR