

Dear Members:

Connecticut's retired teachers know a good deal about sacrifice. Many have had no increase in benefits and have already faced increased insurance premiums the past two years. Most are in great anticipation of what appears to be only a 1.5% increase this year. All the while fuel and grocery prices continue to escalate almost out of control. We are bearing the burdens of living in colder homes, cutting coupons, and purchasing items of lesser quality. Our real estate values have declined, while our taxes have not. At the same time that our lower middle class position is threatened, the wealthy are faring better than ever in our past history.

Only government can make a difference for all of us who are not wealthy by standing for us in this time of need. It does not do so, when it threatens our physical well-being by increasing our medical and other costs and allowing and yes, even participating in our exploitation.

There are instances, today, in our country, which show both the effects of this exploitation of public employees and the havoc it can bring. Public retirees and employees should not be singled out to balance a state budget that can be balanced more fairly by shutting down waste and placing a greater burden upon wealthy individuals and businesses, who in reality, would not even notice any difference in their living standard by contributing more if necessary.

While you face a difficult task, remember that in good times, budget mis-management by overspending, was not of our doing. We did not lose a good portion of our retirement funds in the Enron Debacle. We increased our contribution from 6 to 7% in recent times, while the state adjusted the retirement system which resulted in watering it down for us. We have more than met our fair contribution while working for negotiated, and not high salaries in anticipation of a safe and deserved retirement. Please stop it's erosion.

John Hammer Jr.
Retired Teacher
Danbury Public Schools