

SB946

I know life is not fair and you work hard to guard yourself from life's downturns. If you were raised in my generation, security during retirement was a goal to strive for during your working years. It was with this goal, that I entered State service. The money wasn't good, but I would have a secure retirement. I would not be living on the hog, I would have to be frugal, but I would get by with my pension, my retirement benefits and social security.

My scenario represents about 90,000 employees of the State of Maryland. When we had to accept furloughs or no step or pay increases to balance the State of Maryland's budget, we accepted that grudgingly. Why? Because we were told verbally and in writing that if a State employee worked a specific amount of time and contributed a certain portion of money from your salary those benefits would be there during retirement. Well they took away one of those benefits with the passage of SB946. SB946 eliminated prescription drug coverage to the most vulnerable of the State's population. The disabled and senior citizens 65 and older.

In 2003-2004 we did not receive raises, step increases or COLA, but our required contributions for health care increased.

In 2005 we received a maximum of increase of \$752 for the year.

In 2006, lawmakers gave us a COLA of 1.5% but increased our mandatory contributions to 3%.

In 2007, lawmakers gave us a raise up to 2% but increased our mandatory contributions 4%.

In 2008- 2009, lawmakers gave us a 2% increase in salaries, but increased our mandatory contributions to 5%.

In 2010-2014 instead of raises, we received furlough days that reduced our salary by 2.6%.

And then lawmakers added insult to injury in 2013 when they received a 16% pay increase. Looking at this ten-year span of legislative decisions I came to the realization that our compromises, our willingness to help the State balance its budget, fueled this arrogance that Maryland lawmakers could become Judge, Jury and Executioner with the lives of its employees. Even though it is a fact that as we get older our bodies deteriorate, these lawmakers said we didn't need the benefit that we worked for and contributed money for to save our lives. We are now being told that our lives are not essential, that promises made by the government can be promises broken.

Parents raise their children telling them not to lie (example: you will have prescription drug coverage in retirement; not to cheat (example: you are getting a raise) and not to steal (example: Yes we took your money for this coverage, but we don't have your money now - pay for it yourself). Maryland lawmakers have somehow waylaid those integral ethical considerations when they talk with a straight face about legislating the means to kill almost 90,000 people. Without medication to sustain their lives, these people will die. I will die.

I seek to reinstate what was taken and to hold those who took it accountable to the State retirees whose money they stole. Maryland lawmakers played God with the lives of senior citizens and we, the retired employees of Maryland now face shortened mortality as a result. I will fight. Seniors will fight because in the end, WE, as human beings do MATTER.

"How can you compromise with people who don't want you to exist? They want us to disappear. I can't adapt to death." Amy Harmon, From Sand and Ash.

Ken Fitch

If you wish to get more information about Fitch v. Maryland please email UnitedWeMatter@gmail.com or call 443.608-0866. Help support Maryland State Retirees keep their prescription drug coverage