

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Dr. Fred Giertz

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library  
*Illinois Statecraft Pension Crisis in Illinois* Oral History project

Interview # ISC-A-L-2015-051

Dr. Fred Giertz, long time State University Retirement System Trustee and former Director at the University of Illinois's Institute of Government and Public Affairs, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Statecraft - Pension Crisis in Illinois* Oral History project.

Interview dates and location:

Date: Oct 28, 2015      Location: University of Illinois campus, Urbana, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Philip Pogue, ALPL volunteer

Transcription by: \_\_\_\_\_

Edited by: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Pages: \_\_\_\_\_      Total Time: 1:28 / 1.47 hrs.

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on January, 26, 2016.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

Interview being  
processed

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## Abstract

Dr. Fred Giertz, *Pension Crisis in Illinois*, ISC-A-L-2015-051

**Biographical Information Overview of Interview:** J. Fred Giertz was born in Wichita, Kansas in 1943. He graduated from Wichita North High School, then earned a BA degree from Wichita State University in 1964. He went on to earn a MA and PhD (Economics) from Northwestern University. Dr. Giertz started teaching at Miami of Ohio and then moved to the University of Illinois in 1980, teaching economics. He also served as an instructor and the director for the University of Illinois Policy and Government Affairs Department. His interests are in the areas of state and local taxation, expenditure analysis, and in regional economic development issues. He has published frequently in *State Tax Notes* and the *Central Illinois Business Magazine*. In addition, he helps compile data for the U of Illinois's Flash Index, which examines the Illinois economy. In addition, he has served as a State Universities Retirement System (SURS) Trustee occasionally since 1995. His trusteeship has been in three categories: an appointed trustee, an elected retiree representative, and an elected trustee from active members. Dr. Giertz served as the Executive Director of the 1,200 member National Tax Association.

This interview covers the objectives and functions of the State University Retirement System which covers both university and community college employees, both active and retired. The interview also explores the different age, eligibility, and benefit packages for SURS. Also discussed were the sources of revenue for the systems, including investments, employee contributions, and state funding. The impact of the 2008 recession was discussed, along with major pension changes including compounded COLAs, and the creation of Tier 2 employees of 2011. Dr. Giertz also explores the role of the system plays during discussions by the General Assembly on pension legislation. He also comments on how Illinois's pensions compare with other states, the legality issues of Senate Bill 1, passed in 2013 to help 'fix' the pension shortfall, and causes of the pension unfunded liabilities. Finally, he discusses other viable options following the IL Supreme Court's ruling that SB -1 was unconstitutional.

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** objectives and benefits of the State University Retirement System (SURS); impact of COLAs on pension funds; impact of Tier 2 employees on pension funds; Senate Bill 1 of 2013; pension cost shifting; responsibilities of SURS Trustees; University of Illinois Policy and Government Affairs Department

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