



# San Jose Fire Fighters • Local 230

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March 5, 2012

Mayor and City Council  
City of San Jose  
200 E. Santa Clara St.  
San Jose, CA 95113

RE: RETIREMENT REFORM NEGOTIATIONS

Dear Mayor and Council:

Today, to officiate member support of the proposal advanced by the SJPOA and Local 230 negotiating teams, Fire Fighters completed a three-day ratification process resulting in approval, with a margin of 99%.

On June 20, 2011, as Retirement Reform Negotiations began, I was struck by the tone, tenor, and approach that we were facing, recognizing that rather than meaningful discourse on finding solutions to the rising costs of pension benefits, we would spend our time defending against an unlawful and unfair ballot initiative proposal.

Given that the negotiating table was not going to be the place to find solutions, the San Jose Police Officers Association and San Jose Fire Fighters, IAFF Local 230 made the decision to have the problem-solving dialogue amongst our teams. In that effort, we employed attorneys, pension actuaries, member polls, and other experts with the focused objective of achieving lawful and effective pension reform.

Pension spiking, retirement age, SRBR, COLA, sick leave payouts, rising costs of medical coverage, and of course the cost of pension benefits themselves were all on the table. The process was time and resource intensive, but we were resolute. The output from that exercise was remarkable and is articulated in the proposal that is now before you.

As the deadline for submitting an initiative to the County Registrar looms near, we find ourselves at a dangerous crossroads. The collision course between Constitutional Law and the City's proposed ballot initiative will be costly, and the City's future will be uncertain. What is certain is that its advancement will invite litigation and stoke vitriol. For too long, employees of the City will be at odds with their employer, and far too much of employee and City financial resources will line the pockets of attorneys. In the end, the City will have handed its fate over to the courts – a circumstance that can be fully avoided.

As you have seen through our Pension Reform Performance Guarantee and now through this ratification, San Jose Fire Fighters are serious about pension reform. I can assure you that we are no less committed to defending our constitutional rights. Lawful and effective pension reform is in your grasp. It will take only prudent leadership to hold it.

Respectfully,

Robert Sapien, Jr., President

