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2024 PENSION INSTITUTE WEBINAR SERIES

SPEAKER BIOS

Day 1: March 6, 2024

William R. Atwood, Executive Director, *Firefighters' Pension Investment Fund*

Bill Atwood was retained as Executive Director of the Firefighters' Pension Investment Fund (FPIF) in March of 2020. Among his earliest responsibilities were opening a checking account and drafting a budget for the FPIF. FPIF has since successfully consolidated \$7 billion in Article 4 pension assets, held by 295 different pension funds, and has prudently invested its portfolio.

FPIF's current portfolio value is \$8.5 billion.

Prior to joining FPIF Bill was Vice President at the Illinois Finance Authority, where he worked on the development of pension funding policies. In that role he worked closely with the Governor's Office and the Illinois Pension Consolidation Feasibility Task Force, where he helped draft SB1300, that created the FPIF.

From 2003 until 2018 Bill served as Executive Director of the Illinois State Board of Investment (ISBI), which has fiduciary responsibility for approximately \$23 billion in defined benefit and defined contribution retirement assets.

In 2014 Bill was named Outstanding Large Public Pension Fund Manager of the Year by Institutional Investor Magazine.

Bill has a bachelor's degree from Southern Illinois University, and Master of Liberal Arts Degree from the University of Chicago. He lives in Downers Grove with his wife Reagen, his daughter Ainsley, and his son William.

Allison Barrett, Partner, *Lauterbach & Amen, LLP*

Since joining Lauterbach & Amen over 20 years ago, Allison has helped establish L&A's role as the recognized experts in Article 3 and Article 4 pension benefits administration. Ms. Barrett works with pension boards, pension fund members, the Illinois Department of Insurance and the IRS to ensure the accuracy and timeliness of pension benefit calculations, payments, and reporting. Allison has developed instructional sections of the IPPFA Certified Trustee Program and Retirement Coordinator Program, and the IMTA Pension Administrator Certification Program, and is a frequent speaker at AFFI, IAFFD, IGFOA, IMTA, IPFA, IPPFA, and NIAFFD events.

Kent Custer, Chief Investment Officer, *Illinois Police Officers' Pension Investment Fund (IPOPIF)*

Kent Custer joined the Illinois Police Officers' Pension Investment Fund (IPOPIF) as their first Chief Investment Officer in May of 2021. IPOPIF is a public pension investment fund responsible for consolidating and managing the investment assets of 357 separate Illinois Pension Code Article 3 (police) pension funds. Prior to IPOPIF Mr. Custer was the Chief Investment Officer of the Dallas Police and Fire Pension System. Earlier roles include Chief Investment Officer of the Illinois Prepaid Tuition Trust Fund,

Senior Investment Officer at the Illinois Teachers' Retirement System, and Investment Analyst at A.G. Edwards. Mr. Custer started his career as a submarine officer in the United States Navy. He received his BA from Southern Illinois University and his MBA from Washington University in St. Louis. He holds the Chartered Financial Analyst designation.

Brian D. LeFevre, CPA, MBA, Partner, *Sikich LLP*

Brian D. LeFevre, CPA, MBA, is responsible for providing technical services to Sikich's governmental clients in all areas of governmental accounting, auditing, financial reporting, budget development, revenue and expenditure forecasting, and cash and debt management. Brian has participated in hundreds of audits of municipalities and other governmental units since he began his career with Sikich in 1993. He has also been responsible in developing and serving as lead instructor for governmental accounting, auditing and financial reporting training courses internally for the firm and for the Illinois Government Finance Officers Association (IGFOA). Brian serves on the GAAP sub-committee of the Government Report Review Committee of the Illinois CPA Society.

Brian's service areas include Governmental Audit, Accounting, Governmental Financial Reporting, and Police and Fire Pension Accounting Services. Brian received a Bachelor's Degree in Accounting, from Valparaiso University and a Master of Business Administration from Northern Illinois University.

Thomas Walstrum, Senior Business Economist, *Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago*

Thomas Walstrum is a senior business economist in the economic research department at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago. His responsibilities include the Seventh District's contribution to the Beige Book, the [Chicago Fed Survey of Economic Conditions](#), and briefings for the Chicago Fed president on Seventh District economic conditions. He also is a contributing author to the Bank's [Midwest Economy blog](#).

Walstrum holds a B.A. in economics from Wheaton College, Illinois, and a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Illinois at Chicago, with concentrations in labor and urban and regional economics.

Day 2: March 7, 2024

Paul Davis, Area Vice President & Regional Director-Gallagher Cyber Liability, *Arthur J. Gallagher & Co.*

Paul is a licensed attorney and dedicated cyber insurance specialist for Gallagher clients. As a member of the Cyber & Technology Practice at Gallagher he utilizes his legal background and specialized knowledge in cyber insurance to help clients identify unfavorable insurance policy terms and conditions, contractual risk transfer solutions, potential gaps in coverage and craft individually tailored risk management solutions to address the rapidly evolving cybersecurity threat environment. He holds a bachelor's degree from Tufts University, a Juris Doctor from the University of Denver and a Cyber COPE Insurance Certification at the Heinz College's School of Information Systems and Management at Carnegie Mellon University.

Jason Franken, *Foster & Foster, Inc.*

Jason is a principal with Foster & Foster, Inc. in its Naperville office. He is a Fellow of the Society of Actuaries and an Enrolled Actuary and has been a pension consultant for over 25 years. He is the lead actuary for both consolidated pension plans and works with over 100 local pension boards and municipalities.

Thomas J. Kavanagh, Area Vice President, Arthur J. Gallagher & Co.

Thomas is a highly experienced and accomplished professional in the field of risk management. With over 31 years of experience, he currently serves as the Area Vice President at Arthur J. Gallagher, a leading insurance brokerage and risk management firm.

Prior to his role at Arthur J Gallagher, Thomas was a partner/owner of Nicoud Insurance Services, where he gained valuable expertise in various areas of risk management and business operations. He specialized in Public Entity risk management, Labor Unions, Taft-Hartley Funds, JATC, Multi-Employer Funds, as well as bank professional coverage.

In addition to his successful career in risk management, Thomas has also made significant contributions to public service. He served as a three-term alderperson in the Village of Chatham, where he demonstrated strong leadership skills and a commitment to community development. During his time in public service, he had the privilege of participating in and graduating from the Leadership Enhancement and Development Course through the Institute of Government and Public Affairs at the University of Illinois.

Thomas is a lifelong learner and actively engages in industry learning events to stay updated with the latest trends and developments in risk management. He holds the designations of Certified School Risk Manager (CSRMS) and Commercial Lines Coverage Specialist (CLCS), which reflect his dedication to professional growth and expertise.

Currently, Thomas is in the process of completing his Chartered Property Casualty Underwriter (CPCU) designation, further enhancing his knowledge and skills in the field.

Thomas is a graduate of Quincy College, where he acquired a solid educational foundation that has contributed to his successful career. His extensive experience, commitment to professional development, and dedication to public service makes him a highly respected and sought-after professional in the field of risk management.

Carolyn Welch Clifford, Ottosen DiNolfo Hasenbalg & Castaldo, Ltd.

Carolyn Welch Clifford has devoted her legal career to the representation of local governments in Illinois with a special emphasis on legal issues involving the fire service. In her practice, Ms. Clifford primarily represents public pension funds and commissions, and is actively involved in legal issues regarding the management of public pension funds. Ms. Clifford has extensive experience in handling firefighter and police disability pension matters from the initial hearing stage to appellate review. Her experience with employment matters from the initial hiring stage through disability and retirement provides her a unique perspective in advising clients. Ms. Clifford has handled a number of appellate cases and argued before the Illinois Appellate Court. Her appellate cases have included several issues of first impression. Ms. Clifford is currently the Chair of the Public Safety Affinity Group of the National Association of Public Pension Attorneys and is a frequent speaker on pension topics at the state and national level. Ms. Clifford received her J.D. from the University of Illinois.