

IL Governor Must Pay Worker Raises

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (AP) — Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn violated the union contract with 30,000 state workers by refusing to give them a pay raise due July 1, an arbitrator ruled Tuesday.

Edwin Benn ordered Quinn to start paying the 2 percent increase and provide back pay within 30 days.

"As a matter of contract, the state cannot simply refuse to pay the increase," Benn wrote in his opinion.

Quinn's administration said the matter concerns broader issues than the arbitrator could consider and that the Democratic governor will appeal in state court.

The raises are promised in state employees' union contracts, but Quinn has argued he doesn't have to pay the raises because lawmakers didn't include enough money for them in the budget.

"Funding these raises would mean that these agencies would not be able to make payroll for the entire year, disrupting core services for the people of Illinois," spokesman Grant Klinzman said, referring to the agencies where the state employees work.

The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees applauded the decision.

"It makes clear that the governor cannot simply break a contract at will," Henry Bayer, the union's executive director, said in a statement. "We call on the governor to keep his word and accept the arbitrator's clear ruling to avoid further costly litigation."

Benn acknowledged that he could not address the administration's claim that the state constitution prohibits payments of money lawmakers have not appropriated.

But he noted in his order that union had agreed to concessions to help the state during a fiscal crisis. Those included delaying half of the 4 percent raise union workers were supposed to get July 1.

Source URL (retrieved on 07/28/2014 - 7:43am):

<http://www.impomag.com/news/2011/07/il-governor-must-pay-worker-raises>

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Published on Industrial Maintenance & Plant Operation (<http://www.impomag.com>)
