

Illinois Supreme Court Chief Justice to Keynote IRTA Convention

Lloyd Karmeier Wrote Unanimous Court Opinion in 2015 Overturning Pension Reduction Legislation

By Nathan Mihelich

Illinois retired educators will convene October 14-15 for the IRTA Biennial Convention at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Springfield, Ill. In addition to the robust lineup of speakers, exhibitors, programs and other activities, Illinois Supreme Court Chief Justice Lloyd Karmeier will open the convention with a keynote address. Karmeier, known for his candid and outspoken thoughts on the American justice system, its importance in democracy, and its responsibility to ensure protections are available to all, equally; was the author of the opinion, which was written after the Illinois Supreme court unanimously overturned the State's attempt to diminish educator pension and health benefits in 2015. That case, Heaton V. Quinn, is commonly referred to as the defeat of Senate Bill 1, which was the name of the initial bill that reduced educator benefits. The IRTA, thereafter, spent more than a half million dollars opposing that legislation and taking the case all the way to the supreme court.

"Crisis is not an excuse to abandon the rule of law, it is a summons to defend it," Justice Karmeier wrote in the [opinion](#) which penned the court's position that the justices did take note of the state's dire financial condition, but even so, they could not ignore, neglect or reject the Illinois Constitution. Illinois pension protection clause promises that *benefits shall not be diminished or impaired*.

"What I'm going to be talking about [at the IRTA Convention] is probably near and dear to the hearts of most retired people or people who intend to retire with a state retirement plan. I am looking forward to it," Karmeier said during a phone interview.

"I find him very engaging, very receptive to questions and very eager to come," IRTA President Roger Hampton said. "Justice Karmeier articulates well in a way that a non-lawyer would understand. He will engage our members and it will be an excellent experience."

Questions for Justice Karmeier can be submitted in advance by filling out the online form at www.irtaonline.org. All IRTA members are welcomed and encouraged to attend the Biennial Convention. Registration is now open. Visit the IRTA [website](#) for more information and registration materials.

Karmeier is the 120th Chief Justice of the State of Illinois. He was unanimously elected to that position by his fellow justices in 2016 and, as Chief Justice, is the chief administrative officer of a unified court system with supervisory authority over the more than 900 judges. Chief Justice Karmeier was first elected to the Illinois Supreme Court in 2004 and then retained by the voters for a second term in 2014.

Karmeier's term as Chief Justice will expire at the end of October. "I probably will be a retiree in the not too distant future," Karmeier concluded. "I really love what I am doing, and I am blessed to continue at my age at this level."

Karmeier's term on the Illinois Supreme Court expires in 2024. He said he will not run for reelection.

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