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**Pension for Philip will top his pay;45% boost kicks in for '04; other perks also in package**

By Dave McKinney

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SPRINGFIELD-Retiring state Senate President James "Pate" Philip will receive more in pension income a year after he leaves office than what he currently gets in his Statehouse paycheck.

The Wood Dale Republican, who announced his retirement plans this week, now is paid $81,007. In 2003, he'll begin drawing pension income of nearly $69,000.

But in 2004, he'll get a one-time 45 percent boost to bring his annual pension to nearly $100,000. Every year after that will come with automatic 3 percent cost-of-living increases.

His take from the legislative retirement system, the state's most generous tax-funded pension program, will come on top of free health care and no-strings-attached use of $1.5 million in campaign funds.

A Philip aide couldn't comment on Philip's pension perk, saying she was unfamiliar with the figures calculated by plugging the Senate president's current salary and tenure into the General Assembly Retirement System's pension formula.

"Talk to the pension system," his spokeswoman Patty Schuh said.

Philip's sweet pension deal, the result of a system lawmakers set up for themselves, caps a legislative career that began in 1967 and is expected to end sometime in the coming weeks, as soon as he finds a successor from DuPage County.

Philip, the longest-serving legislative leader in state history, will go down as one of the most colorful, politically incorrect figures to take the stage in Springfield. He also was the architect of a series of conservative victories in the 1990s that included suburban tax caps, Chicago school reform and tougher criminal sentences.

Over his career, Philip has infuriated minorities and women with a series of slurs.

He voted against establishing a state holiday for the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., once questioned the work ethic of minority state workers and, according to a report by Chicago Sun-Times political columnist Steve Neal, privately referred to Jews as "hooknoses."

"You know what you don't understand," he told reporters Thursday, "when you criticize minorities, whether you're right or wrong, their reaction is it's a racist remark. Do you ever think I might be right about what I was suggesting? It was not a racist remark. I just disagree with them."

Philip also insisted he never was a "Chicago hater" despite ridiculing aldermen for their penchant for jail, trying to take over O'Hare Airport and blocking a downtown circulator system, and once calling the city's school system a "rathole."

"The minute you criticize them, you're a racist or anti-Chicago," Philip said. "Hey, if you're one of these guys who want to be politically correct and love all these guys in the media, you'll never tell the truth. You'll never tell the truth, and that's what's wrong with the system."

Mayor Daley lavished praise on Philip on Tuesday, saying he respected his commitment to public service. But when asked whether he viewed Philip as a Chicago hater, Daley delicately avoided the question and said, "Well, he's retiring. My belief is he represented DuPage County very well."

The man taking over as Senate president, Emil Jones of Chicago, said he'd miss doing battle with Philip but not miss his attitudes that sometimes surfaced about minorities. "Those were his problems. He has to live with that," said Jones, who is African-American.

Contributing: *Fran Spielman*