



The Widening Gap Update

WASHINGTON

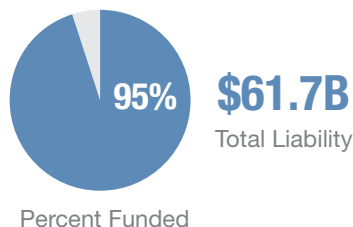
Washington consistently failed to pay its full annual pension contribution between 2005 and 2010. The system was 95 percent funded in fiscal year 2010 and faced a \$3 billion funding gap—the system’s funding level has gradually declined from a high of 126 percent in 2000. Most experts agree that a fiscally sustainable system should be at least 80 percent funded. The state also had a \$7 billion bill for retiree health care costs, none of which was funded, well below the 8 percent national average in 2010.

Washington lawmakers in 2011 approved eliminating or limiting annual cost-of-living increases for retirees in two plans and lowering taxpayer contributions to the pension system.

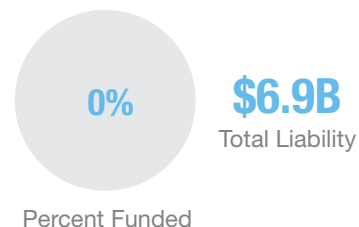
TOTAL BILL COMING DUE

Washington’s retirement plans had a liability of \$68.7 billion and the state has fallen \$10 billion short in setting aside money to pay for it.

Pensions



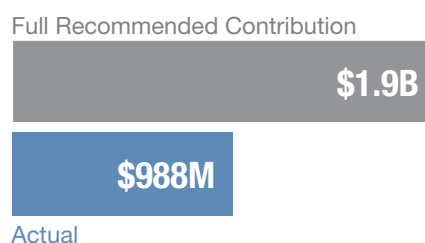
Retiree Health Care



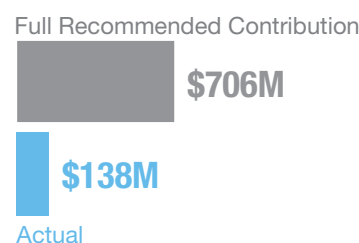
ANNUAL RECOMMENDED CONTRIBUTION

In 2010, Washington only paid 53 percent of the recommended contribution to its pension plans and just 20 percent of what the state should have paid to fund retiree health benefits.

Pensions



Retiree Health Care



HOW DID THIS STATE FARE?

Washington **needed to improve** how it managed its long-term liabilities for pensions and was cause for **serious concern** in how it handled its bill for retiree health care.

Pensions



Retiree Health Care



The grades for pensions and retiree health benefits assess how well the states have managed these liabilities. The pension grade is based on being above 80 percent funded (2 points), having an unfunded liability that is less than the payroll for active members (1 point), and paying at least 90 percent of the recommended pension contribution over the last five years (1 point). Plans that got all four points were solid performers, plans with two or three needed improvement, and plans with one or no points were cause for serious concern. Grades for retiree health benefits were based on whether the state’s benefits had a funding level above the national average (1 point), whether 90 percent of the recommended contribution was made in the most recent year (1 point), and whether the state’s plans were better funded based on the most recent data than they were in the prior year (1 point). States with two or three points were solid performers, those with just one point needed improvement, and states with no points were cause for serious concern. This fact sheet stems from a 50-state analysis of states’ retiree benefit obligations by the Pew Center on the States. The full report and 50 state fact sheets can be found at