



# The Widening Gap Update

# ALASKA

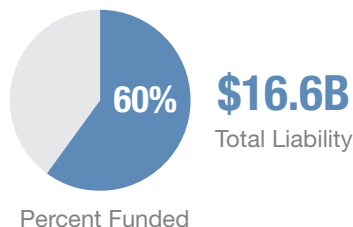
Alaska paid, or exceeded, its full annual pension contribution twice from 2005 to 2010. The system was 60 percent funded in fiscal year 2010 and faced a \$7 billion funding gap. Most experts agree that a fiscally sustainable system should be at least 80 percent funded. The state also had a \$6 billion bill for retiree health care costs, half of which was funded, well above the 8 percent national average in 2010.

In 2006, Alaska joined Michigan as the only states requiring newly hired employees to join a 401(k)-style, defined contribution retirement plan. But Alaska's funding challenge stems from the nearly 59,000 members in the old, defined-benefit plan, who far outnumber the nearly 12,000 in the new plan. The unfunded liabilities for those workers and retirees in the old system, coupled with investment losses suffered during the recession, have resulted in the funding gap facing the state.

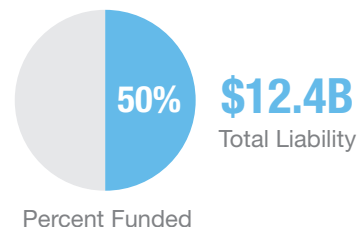
## TOTAL BILL COMING DUE

Alaska's retirement plans had a liability of \$29 billion and the state has fallen \$13 billion short in setting aside money to pay for it.

### Pensions



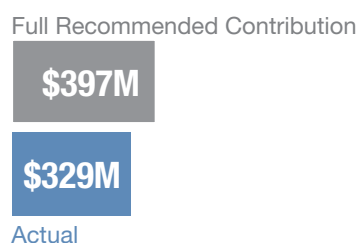
### Retiree Health Care



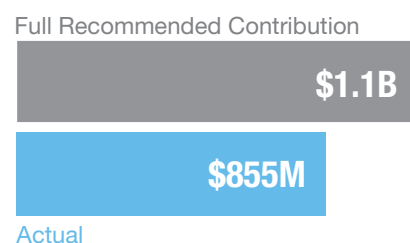
## ANNUAL RECOMMENDED CONTRIBUTION

In 2010, Alaska only paid 83 percent of the recommended contribution to its pension plans and just 77 percent of what the state should have paid to fund retiree health benefits.

### Pensions



### Retiree Health Care



## HOW DID THIS STATE FARE?

Alaska's management of its long-term liabilities for pensions was cause for **serious concern** but the state was a **solid performer** in managing its retiree health care bill.

### 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