2016 ARIZONA PUBLIC SAFETY PERSONNEL RETIREMENT SYSTEM PENSION REFORM
Pensions sliding into deeper hole if steps not taken

Figuring out the future of public-employee pension plans is a complicated business, usually.

For our convenience, however, the Arizona Auditor General’s Office conducted a 10-year performance examination of the state’s public-safety retirement system, as well as two other state retirement plans, and arrived at a simple one-word conclusion: “Deteriorating.”

That the Public Safety Personnel Retirement System, or PSPRS, is in bad shape is not a new finding.

Arizona’s political leadership has known for years that its pension plan for retired public-safety officers was far worse off than other public-employee plans, none of which is flush with cash.

Leaders taken steps to stabilize the PSPRS, as well as the other two retirement systems examined by the auditor general, the Corrections Officers Retirement Plan and the Elected Officials Retirement Plan.

The most serious of those efforts, however, was foiled in 2014 when the state Supreme Court concluded the state’s contracts with retirees cannot be altered once offered.

As a result, the deterioration of the pension plans appears to be accelerating. Officer plans are “multiple employer” plans, meaning local agencies are responsible for their own pension obligations.

Some smaller local agencies do not have the resources to pay their end of those obligations this year, much less into the future.

PSPRS administrators point to recent court decisions as a major reason Arizona’s public pensions can’t pull themselves out of the liability hole. The auditor general agrees.

The auditors concluded that required permanent benefit increases keep the systems sliding toward insolvency.

Even if the systems earn more on investments, the formulas require them to increase payments to beneficiaries.

Half of every earned dollar must be paid to members.

The systems, which are required to invest prudently and responsibly, would have to earn crazy money on investments to start growing again. That isn’t going to happen.

“By design and structure, that (pay-out formula) depletes money out of the system faster than you can replace it with investment returns,” PSPRS administrator Jared Smout said Tuesday.

In 2011, state legislators attempted...
THE PROBLEM

How did we get here????
We Had 3 Major Problems

1. Underperforming investment returns (2 dramatic downturns in last decade)
2. Unrealistic expected rate of return
3. Permanent Benefit Increases (PBI) have hurt plan’s solvency while giving 4% compounding retiree raises for 29 consecutive years while the system has been tanking
PSPRS Degrading Solvency

- **Unfunded Liability**: $6.6B in FY'15
- **Funded Ratio**: 48% in FY'15

The chart shows the decline in funded ratio and the rise in unfunded liability from FY'03 to FY'15.
Causes of Problems With PSPRS:

PSPRS’ Expected Rate of Return is Unrealistic

- Based on the historic trend, PSPRS is using an unrealistically high expected rate of return at 7.5%

- Actuarially valued returns have been 5% or less since 2002, nearly fifteen years

- If the pattern of 5% average actuarial return continues, unfunded liabilities and normal cost will increase dramatically in the coming years
Causes of Problems With PSPRS:
PSPRS Actual Investment Returns, 1993-2015

Actuarially valued returns have been consistently below the expected rate of return since 2002.

PSPRS 7.5% Assumed Interest
Employer Contribution as % of Payroll

Baseline Total Employer Contribution Rate

UAAL Payment

Normal Cost

Employer DB Normal Cost
Employer DC Normal Cost
UAAL Amortization Payment
Baseline - 7.5%DR
A 5% average return (FY2017-2038) would require $5.5 billion additional employer contributions (Inflation adjusted).

The light blue bars above the yellow line represent $5.5 billion in additional pension debt payments for taxpayers if returns are just 5.0% instead of the expected 7.5%.
In 2011, the Arizona Legislature addressed pension reform.

We agreed with most of the reforms; however we held deep concerns that their solution – SB1609 – was not Constitutional. Unfortunately....
In *Fields* in March 2014, the Arizona Supreme Court ruled that

**SB1609 illegally diminished benefits of pension recipients.**

SB1609 illegally changed the retiree COLA formula.
$375 million.
This ruling will cost the fund (and AZ taxpayers)

- $40 million in back payments to retirees
- $335 million to re-establish the Excess Earnings Account
- Making these payments will push employer contribution rates to more than 55%.
MORE CASES TO COME……..

Very likely that most of not all aspects of 1609 will be reversed.

Hall Case
The Risks of Inaction

1. Rising employer contribution rates result in more money to pensions, crowding out other public services
2. Inability to fill open positions
3. No funding for training or necessary equipment
4. Inability to raise public safety wages
5. New tax & debt proposals
   • (e.g., failed Prescott PSPRS tax, pension obligation bonds)
6. Service-level insolvency
7. Municipal bankruptcy
8. Inaction is not a choice
THE PROCESS

A collaborative approach to develop a proposed reform for PSPRS
The Reform Development Process

• Fire Fighters Develop a plan after SB 1609

• Collaborative stakeholder working groups
  • Public safety associations (PFFA, PLEA, FOP)
  • Representatives from the Office of Governor Doug Ducey
  • Legislative pension workgroup, led by Sen. Lesko, League of Cities & Towns pension reform task force

• Reason Foundation provided education, policy options, and actuarial support for all stakeholders, and facilitated consensus amongst stakeholders on conceptual design and reform framework
  • Separate negotiation tracks have focused the fiscal elements of the reform, and the governance elements of the reform
THE SOLUTION

Fixing broken PBI design
Stable, affordable normal cost
Reduces taxpayer risk exposure by more than half
Minimize contribution rate volatility
Today, if PSPRS earns over the 9% assumed earnings rate, half that money stays in the Fund.

The other half goes into the Excess Earnings Account.

By draining the main fund during profitable years, we slow its recovery and lower the funded level.

Actuaries say the Excess Earnings Account is 80% of the PSPRS problem.

Why? Because for 29 consecutive years retirees have received a 4% annual COLA. That simply isn’t sustainable.
CREATE GENERATIONS/TIERS

- Tier 1 – 20 years of service prior to January 2012
- Tier 2a – Hired prior to January 2012
- Tier 2b – Hired after January 2012
- Tier 3 – Hired after July 2017
CHANGE GOVERNANCE

TRYING TO PREVENT THIS FROM EVER HAPPENING AGAIN
GOVERNANCE

• Guardrails
• Balance the risk between employees and employers
• Balance seats on the PSPRS board to reflect risk
• New generation not responsible for past liability
• Best practices from many other well designed systems
• New unfunded liabilities associated with any future benefit increase required to be fully paid in the year of enactment and cannot be amortized over any period of years
• At no time will any employer’s or employee's annual payment to PSPRS be less than their share of actuarially determined normal cost.
• No credits against normal cost shall be factored in to annual employer or employee contributions. Remember when times were good, the employers paid very little. This would not happen again.
• Addition of advisory committee to include other stakeholders
THE SOLUTION IMPACT:
FISCAL IMPACT: EMPLOYER PAYROLL COSTS WILL GO DOWN
TOTAL SAVINGS TO THE PSPRS

1/2 BILLION DOLLARS OVER NEXT 30 YEARS

21% REDUCTION IN LIABILITIES

PREDICTABLE AND STABLE FUTURE
CONCLUSION

Summarizing how the proposed reform will address the problems and challenges of PSPRS
## How Well Proposals Meet Objectives

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Proposed Reform</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Provide Retirement Security for Members &amp; Retirees</td>
<td>UNCERTAIN Broken PBI design &amp; unfunded liabilities threaten plan solvency</td>
<td>YES Retained a sustainable COLA and properly funded, future potential unfunded liability payments reduced</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) Reduce Costs for Employer/Taxpayers and Employees</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES New COLA design, equal cost sharing, stepped-multiplier based on years of service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Stabilize Contribution Rates for the Long-term</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES Employer/employee equal cost sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Reduce Taxpayer and Pension System Exposure to Financial and Market Risk</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES 21% Reduction in Accrued Liabilities by 2046, 50% Reduction in Potential New Hire Unfunded Liability Costs for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Ensure Ability to Recruit 21st Century Employees</td>
<td>SOME</td>
<td>YES New hires offered choice of hybrid or portable DC plan, new DB stepped-multiplier incentivizes retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) Improve Governance &amp; Transparency</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES Significant commitment by all stakeholders to substantive change to governance; details to be determined.</td>
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THE PLAN EXECUTION

POLITICAL PROCESS TO GET THIS DONE
Legislative

Senate unanimous – 49 House
GOVERNOR DUCEY SIGNS PUBLIC SAFETY PENSION REFORM
“The benefits of the beneficiaries shall neither be diminished nor impaired except for the provisions in Bill XXXX, as passed by the Legislature in 2016”.
taxpayers and ensures that police officers and firefighters continue to have a secure retirement.

legislation and now Proposition 124 is a perfect example of how government should work and I hope that you all
join me in voting “Yes” on Proposition 124 on May 17.

Mark Burdick

ARGUMENTS “ AGAINST” PROPOSITION 124

There were no arguments against Proposition 124.
PASSED BY 80%
NEXT UP .......... CORRECTIONS

- 2018 BALLOT
QUESTIONS????