

TEXAS PENSION PLANS

City Council Approves New Compensation, Benefits for Council Aides, Including Pension

May 20, 2021, By Jackie Wang

“Starting June 1, council aides will contribute 6% of their pay to the Texas Municipal Retirement System (TMRS) and the City will match that approximately twice over, meaning it would contribute about 12% to the aides’ retirement plans.

“Like civilian City of San Antonio employees, City Council aides must work for at least five years before vesting in their retirement money through TMRS. Other City Council aide benefits, including health insurance and family leave, will also mirror that of civilian City staff, Chief Financial Officer Ben Gorzell said.”

[San Antonio Report](#)

Texas House Gives Initial Approval on Reform of State’s Employees Retirement System Pensions

May 25, 2021, By Wes Rapaport

“Texas House members advanced legislation aiming to reform the state’s pension program in the Employees Retirement System of Texas...According to a legislative analysis of Senate Bill 321, the legislation, which received initial approval on a voice vote Tuesday, has two main objectives...The bill analysis states the current funded ratio for the ERS pension fund ‘is 66 percent and the unfunded liability is approximately \$14.7 billion.’

“The bill needs to be formally approved in the House on Wednesday before it can advance to the governor’s desk.

[KXAN](#)

Overhaul to Texas State Government Employees’ Retirement Accounts Advanced by House

May 26, 2021, By Shawn Mulcahy

“A major overhaul to Texas’ pension system for state employees advanced out of the Texas House on Wednesday, inching one step closer toward becoming law amid impending legislative deadlines.

“Bonnen amended the bill Wednesday to add a provision that would allow current workers with at least 43.5 years of employment to begin drawing their annuity before retirement.”

[Texas Tribune](#)

TEXAS ECONOMIC INDICATORS

How Texas's Economy Compares to Other States

May 20, 2021, By Samuel Stebbins (Excerpt from article on 24/7 Wall St.)

“The COVID-19 pandemic sent economic shockwaves through the U.S. economy, tripling the monthly unemployment to nearly 15% and leading to a more than 30% quarterly decline in GDP -- by far the largest economic contraction in U.S. history...No corner of the country was untouched by the pandemic's economic consequences -- but some states have emerged better off than others. A range of factors, including industrial diversity, labor force education levels, household income, and long-term GDP growth, have an effect on a state's overall economic strength -- and its ability to withstand the impact of the pandemic.

“A large segment of Texas' economy includes industries that were hit hardest during the COVID-19 pandemic such as oil and gas extraction. Partially as a result, Texas' economic output fell by 1.9% from the end of 2019 through the end of 2020. The contraction was not enough to offset gains of previous years, however. The state's economy expanded at an average pace of 1.7% a year over the last half decade, faster than the comparable national expansion of 1.4%.”

[The Center Square](#)

Lawmakers Set to Return to Austin to Decide How to Spend \$16B in Federal COVID-19 Relief Money

May 21, 2021, By Madlin Mekelburg and María Méndez

“Lawmakers already are expected to return to the Capitol later this year to redraw the state's political boundaries because of federal delays in delivering detailed census data needed for the redistricting process. The regular legislative session ends May 31.

“Abbott told lawmakers on Thursday night that when they meet to draw new political districts, they'll also be responsible for allocating \$16 billion in federal relief dollars.”

[Austin American Statesman](#)

In Rare Interview, CEO of Texas' Largest Generator of Electricity Said State Economy at Stake if Lawmakers Don't Pass Energy Reform

May 23, 2021, By Jason Whitely and Michael McCardel

“When I go to a meeting, a chamber [of commerce] meeting, and I hear Texas Instruments say we're thinking twice about putting in a semi-conductor plant because of electricity, we can't miss on this one,” said Vistra CEO Curt Morgan on Sunday's *Inside Texas Politics*. “We have to have electricity. It is fundamental to everyday life for businesses and people alike. And when it's that big a deal, it's my view that elected officials will come together and do the right thing.”

[WFAA](#)

NATIONAL PENSION, INVESTMENTS & LEGAL

What's Going On With Vermont's Pensions?

May 20, 2021, By Angela Evancie

[26:54 Radio Feature + Article Version]—"Vermont's underfunded pension system has forced an awkward question: If the state makes a promise to its workers, does it have to keep its word? And just how urgent is the problem, anyway?"

"I'm housing-stressed. You'd think with — you know, I've got a master's degree, I'm experienced, I've got everything I need, and I'm still struggling to afford Vermont,' Jon says. 'And I know I'm not alone. I mean, I've talked to coworkers about this issue. It's a little scary right now. I guess it's just like, does this equation shake out?"

[Vermont Public Radio](#)

Public Pension Oversight Board Discusses Investment Updates; Performance Above Benchmark

May 24, 2021, By Editorial Staff

"The Public Pension Oversight Advisory Board met Monday to discuss investment updates of the Kentucky Public Pension Authority (KPPA), the Kentucky Teacher Retirement System (TRS), and the Judicial Form Retirement System (JFRS).

"The committee heard from David Eager, executive director of the Kentucky Public Pensions Authority. Eager explained that the performance is currently above the benchmark equal to \$55.9 million."

[The Lane Report](#)

American Cities and States Have Issued \$72 Billion of Pension Bonds. Here's What That Means.

May 25, 2021, By Andrea Riquier

"When a state or local government's liability to its pension system grows beyond what seems manageable, officials are often tempted to issue debt to pay down some or much of that amount. Bonds have fixed interest rates, and they've been near long-time lows for the past decade.

"Pension obligation bonds are taxable, meaning they often have complexities that most plain-vanilla municipal bonds don't, the GFOA points out. Among other things, 'taxable debt is typically issued without call options or with 'make-whole' calls, which can make it more difficult and costly to refund or restructure."

[MarketWatch](#)

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