

TEXAS PENSION PLANS

Possibility of Bumped Up Monthly Checks for Retired Teachers Fades

June 11, 2021, By Matt Zdun

“The legislative session came and went, and Texas lawmakers passed on a bill that would have bumped up the monthly checks that retired teachers and school workers receive from the Teacher Retirement System of Texas.

“House Bill 3214 by state Rep. Giovanni Capriglione, R-Southlake, would have provided a monthly cost of living boost to retirees’ checks of 6%, capped at \$100. Those who have been retired for 17 years or less have never seen their checks adjusted with inflation. Advocates for retired teachers had been lobbying lawmakers for multiple sessions.”

[KWTX](#)

Texas Targets Wall Street in Fight Over ESG Investing (2)

June 14, 2021, By Rachel Adams-Heard

“Governor Greg Abbott signed a [bill into law](#) on Monday banning state investments in businesses that cut ties with the oil and gas industry. The underlying message, according to one of the most powerful energy regulators in the state, is simple: Boycott Texas, and we’ll boycott you.”

“In reality, the new law probably won’t lead to massive selling by state funds like the Teacher Retirement System of Texas or the Employees Retirement System of Texas. Thanks to a number of amendments, a fund may be able to justify holding stock in, say, Google -- which won’t provide AI services for oil and gas production -- by demonstrating that it would be bad for its members if it was forced to sell. And if an offending company is held indirectly, like through a private equity fund, there’s another exception.”

[Bloomberg Law](#)

Texas County & District Allocates \$60 Million to Private Equity

June 14, 2021, By James Comtois

“Texas County & District Retirement System, Austin, committed a total of \$60 million to two venture capital funds managed by Lux Capital.

In 2020, the retirement system committed a total of \$2 billion to 32 private equity/venture capital strategies managed by 25 firms, TCDRS’ 2020 transaction report showed.

[Pensions & Investments](#)

TEXAS ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Texas Grid Operator Urges Electricity Conservation as Many Power Generators Are Unexpectedly Offline and Temperatures Rise

June 14, 2021, By Andy Krauss

“Texas’ main power grid struggled to keep up with the demand for electricity Monday, prompting the operator to ask Texans to conserve power until Friday...The Electric Reliability Council of Texas said in a statement Monday that a significant number of unexpected power plant outages, combined with expected record use of electricity due to hot weather, has resulted in tight grid conditions.

During the recent legislative session, Texas lawmakers passed energy grid legislation that aimed to prevent electricity blackouts in response to the February crisis...However, it will likely take years before those changes are fully implemented.

[Texas Tribune](#)

Rationing Cement: How COVID, the February Winter Storm and a Roaring Texas Economy Have Paved the Way to a Tight Cement Supply

June 14, 2021, By Jason Wheeler

[Article + Podcast 37:59]—“We need cement for pools and patios, foundations and freeways. And we use a lot of it in Texas, said Ed Sullivan, the Chief Economist and Senior Vice President of Market Intelligence for the Portland Cement Association. "It's the largest state consumer in the country," he explained.

“Ironically, following the winter storm, weather has helped alleviate the situation. Frequent rains in parts of Texas have prevented a lot of concrete from being poured, allowing stockpiles to recover some. But one person who works in the concrete industry told us on background that the cement stockpile could be consumed within three weeks, now that drier conditions have returned.”

[WFAA](#)

Las Vegas Sands Went All in on Legalizing Casinos in Texas. Here’s Why the Multimillion-dollar Effort Did Not Make It Far This Session

June 16, 2021, By Patrick Svitek

“The legislation — which required voter approval — would have brought a monumental expansion of gambling to Texas, which has some of the most restrictive gaming laws in the country. The centerpiece of the Las Vegas Sands proposal was to build “destination resorts” with casino gambling in the state’s four biggest metropolitan areas.

“Las Vegas Sands ended up spending as much as \$6.3 million on lobbying at the Capitol, according to state records, plus what the company pegged as at least \$2 million on a statewide ad campaign. It is likely that the company’s total spending topped \$10 million, given the number of weeks that the company stayed on the air in the state’s most expensive media markets.”

[Texas Tribune](#)

NATIONAL PENSION, INVESTMENTS & LEGAL

State May Allow Some Workers Back Into Pension System, a Decade After They Were Removed

June 15, 2021, By Matt Friedman

“New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy boasts about how he’s proposed restoring a full payment into the state pension system for the first time in more than two decades.

“But as the state ramps up its contribution to a system that’s underfunded by tens of billions of dollars, it’s also considering restoring eligibility to some public employees — state and county prosecutors, administrative law judges and workers compensation judges — after new hires were taken out of the system more than 10 years ago to lighten the financial burden.”

[Politico New Jersey](#)

North Carolina Lawmakers Approve Pension—Spiking Protection Bill

June 16, 2021, By Nyamekye Daniel

“Senate Bill 668 temporarily stops local boards of education from suing the state for its retirement benefit cap and authorizes additional payment options for the liabilities under the cap.

“Pension spiking occurs when a retiree earns more from the retirement fund than what their contributions were expected to accrue. According to the North Carolina Department of State Treasury, it usually occurs when a state employee gets a promotion late in their career or gets leave or benefit payouts. The extra liability also can lead to across-the-board increases in employer contribution rates, leading to a higher tax burden for North Carolinians.”

[Pensions & Investments](#)

Despite Market Rebound, Rising Unemployment Hurt Public Pensions

June 16, 2021, By Michael Katz

“Although cuts to state and local employment in response to the COVID-19 pandemic had only a minor impact on public pensions’ funded ratios, they did cause a rise in the required contribution rates, according to a recent report from the Center for Retirement Research (CRR) at Boston College.

“The report said that despite better-than-expected revenue for state and local governments during fiscal year 2020, a ‘dramatic reduction’ in the size of the state and local workforce has negatively impacted public pension finances.”

[Chief Investment Officer](#)

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