



Letters to the Editor
The Washington Post
1150 15th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20071

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

The Editors:

It is troubling that *The Washington Post's* editorial page is doing a better job at reporting the facts than its news pages. Such was the case with recent coverage of the Pew Center on the States' report on public sector retirement benefits.

The editorial page acknowledges that Pew found public pensions in the aggregate to have been responsibly well funded, with "\$2.3 trillion socked away" to cover costs, and the majority of the "financing gap" cited in the report attributable to health care programs. The news story, on the other hand, contains glaring errors, attributing to pensions what is really a health care liability – an entirely different type of benefit cost that is mired in a national discussion on health care delivery.

However, both the editorial and the article misrepresent public plan investment assumptions and benefit levels. In reality, investment rates are based on sound advice from actuaries and investment experts, and public plans have historically met or exceeded them over time. Further, past letters to the editor have rightfully noted the average annual benefit is \$22,000, and often goes to individuals ineligible for Social Security and who are required to share in the financing of their state pension.

The economic crisis has hurt all Americans, and all types of retirement savings. Public pensions provide more than just a secure, modest benefit to retirees and survivors, but also act as an economic stabilizer in difficult times – distributing more than \$165 billion last year alone to virtually every community across the country. As the editorial notes, "the bright side" is that steps are being taken at the state and local levels to implement needed changes to ensure these important programs can continue to flourish decades into the future.

Sincerely,

Glenda Chambers, Executive Director, NASRA

Hank Kim, Executive Director, NCPERS

Jim Mosman, Executive Director, NCTR

The National Association of State Retirement Administrators (NASRA), the National Conference on Public Employee Retirement Systems (NCPERS), and the National Council on Teacher Retirement (NCTR), collectively represent State and local public employee retirement systems that hold over \$2.6 trillion in trust for nearly 20 million public employees, retirees and their beneficiaries.