

Opinion: Alter pensions, collective bargaining in California

By Allan Mansoor

Recent events in the Midwest have put a spotlight on one of the most volatile budget issues of the day: pensions for public employees.

Some have described the idea of requiring members of public employee unions to contribute a little bit more to their taxpayer-funded pensions as an assault on working families. But nothing could be further from the truth.

The truth is this: Costs for public pensions have soared nationwide and will continue to soar unless reforms are made. Estimates vary, but they range anywhere from \$200 billion to \$500 billion in California alone. Last year, a Stanford University study estimated the state's unfunded pension liability at \$500 billion, or about six times the current state budget.

Even if the actual number is less, trying to find a couple hundred billion dollars is going to be tough. Taxpayers will be forced to make up the difference either through higher taxes or more cuts in services – or both.

Assemblyman Allan Mansoor, R-Costa Mesa, is serving his first term in the California Legislature and represents the 68th Assembly District.

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