

# **\$100,000 pension club of Calif. retirees is growing**

**By Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee**

The \$100,000 pension club is growing fast.

Almost 9,000 retirees in the California Public Employees' Retirement System receive at least \$100,000 in annual benefits, more than quadruple the number getting that much during 2005, according to a *Bee* review of CalPERS data.

Collectively, these pensioners will receive about \$1.1 billion in benefits this year – roughly triple the general fund budget of the Sacramento City Unified School District.

Such payouts are a hot topic as leaders float competing pension reform plans at the state Capitol. Those who want to curtail big pensions say they are a root cause of huge unfunded liabilities – and the growing pension bill presented each year to taxpayers. Others say large pensions are straw men brandished as a tool to cut the modest benefits of most government workers.

“The outliers are driving the discussion,” said Steve Maviglio, a spokesman for Californians for Retirement Security, a union consortium. “It’s frustrating.”

The rapid growth in the number of \$100,000 pensions is largely a consequence of enhanced retirement benefits approved by local and state governments during the last decade. Tens of thousands of public safety workers, for instance, can retire at age 50 and get most of their annual salary for life.

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