

Lawmakers propose raising retirement age for public workers

By Jon Ortiz, Sacramento Bee

Earlier this year, former Assemblyman Roger Niello proposed a ballot initiative that contained a politically explosive idea: set 62 as the full retirement age for all California public employees, including current workers.

Another idea floated by a pension reform group includes making “defined benefits payable when employees reach the retirement age established by the Social Security Administration” – now 62 years old.

The Little Hoover Commission, an independent state oversight agency, has suggested that looming pension costs as baby boomers retire threaten to crush state and local government programs. Part of the solution, the commission says, is giving current workers less incentive to retire early.

Retirement age is increasingly under discussion as strapped local and state governments scrutinize a range of expenditures, from cellphone costs to employee pay and benefits.

Nearly 60 percent of California voters think the minimum age for drawing a government pension needs to be increased, according to a March Field Poll.

Many public pension systems allow retirement as early as 50, although benefits increase if workers stick around longer.

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