

California pension proposal seeks to hike employee contributions

By Jon Ortiz, Sacramento Bee

From California to Florida, many public employees are paying more for their pensions now than a year ago as strapped state and local governments cast about for savings.

Now a sweeping Republican proposal in the California Senate, among other changes, would hike how much all current and future state and local government workers pay toward their pensions.

A union coalition has blasted the long-shot proposal as a one-size-doesn't-fit-all encroachment on bargaining rights. Many labor groups, including a dozen representing California state workers, already have agreed to higher pension contributions from their members.

Plus, the unions say, pension payments are part of their members' total compensation package. Deals struck that allow low or no employee contributions were in lieu of higher pay, they say.

"Taking this away doesn't take the previous trade-offs into consideration," said Dave Low, head of Californians for Retirement Security, the coalition battling efforts to change public pensions.

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