

California's pension hole now monstrous

By Teri Sforza, Orange County Register

Within the span of only 11 years, the hole at the bottom of California's state and local pension funds increased a staggering 3,046 percent.

The monstrous growth of the gap between what public agencies have promised workers upon retirement and what they actually have – from \$6.3 billion in 2003 to \$198.2 billion in 2013, according to figures gathered by the state controller's office – matters to all Californians, reformers argue.

If it's not filled up with meatier investment earnings and heftier contributions from public workers and employers, that hole will continue to expand, and taxpayers must fill it directly.

Why? Because in California, the promises made to public workers on Day One of their employment can never, ever be broken – at least, not outside of federal bankruptcy court. And even in court, officials from Vallejo and Stockton and San Bernardino did not request permission to modify these burdens, fearing they'd have trouble attracting and retaining workers if the city next door offered something better.

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