

Opinion: Calif. pension fund being squeezed

By Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee

Ron Seeling, the California Public Employees Retirement System's chief actuary, believed he was speaking to a closed-door seminar in 2009 when he warned that public employee pension costs were becoming "unsustainable."



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However, Ed Mendel, a veteran reporter who writes a blog on pensions, was there, and later published Seeling's dire warning.

"I don't want to sugarcoat anything," Seeling said. "We are facing decades without any significant turnarounds in assets, decades of – what I, in my personal words, nobody else's – unsustainable pension costs of between 25 percent of pay for a miscellaneous plan and 40 to 50 percent of pay for a safety plan (police and firefighters) ... unsustainable pension costs. We've got to find some other solutions."

It was eerily prescient of what was to come within a few years.

Seeling made his remarks a decade after then-Gov. Gray Davis and the Legislature had quietly, virtually without notice, decreed a massive, retroactive increase in state employee

pension benefits, which was quickly emulated by hundreds of local governments.

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