
Pew report on public pensions draws ire of public pension trade groups

By Editor Test Thu, Jan 17, 2013

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A newly-released report on state pension plans by the Pew Charitable Trusts has provoked protests from The National Conference on Public Employee Retirement Systems (NCPERS) and from the National Public Pension Coalition, two trade groups.

The groups, which advocate for public pensions, charged that Pew had shown the status of public pensions in the least flattering light by using data from 2009, a nadir of prosperity for the plans, and that Pew had prescribed remedies that would weaken rather than strengthen the finances of public pensions.

Executive director and counsel of NCPERS Hank Kim said, "The analysis presented in the Pew Charitable Trust's new report, *A Widening Gap in Cities*, presents a distorted and outdated picture of the health of municipal pension plans - primarily because the data Pew worked with is four years old."

The data from 2009, a period that included the financial crisis and its immediate aftermath, "cannot yield a realistic representation of the status of municipal pension plans today," Kim said.

NPPC executive director Jordan Marks said in a separate release: "Rather than focus on retirement security and the important role that public pensions play in local economies, Pew suggest various reforms that would slash benefits and put retirement benefits at risk."

NCPERS represents more than 550 public sector pension funds in the U.S. and Canada. NCCP represents millions of public sector employees, including teachers, nurses, police, firefighters and other public sector employees.