

2010-2011 Employer Contribution Rate

On December 11, 2009, the Public School Employees' Retirement Board met and certified the employer contribution rate for fiscal year 2010-2011. The new rate is 8.22% and will be effective for employer contributions for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011. The 8.22% rate is composed of a 0.64% rate for health insurance premium assistance and a pension rate of 7.58%.

The results of the actuarial valuation as of June 30, 2009 determine the employer contribution rate for fiscal year 2010/2011. The actuarial assumptions are compared to the actual experience of the previous year and the rate is calculated and adjusted accordingly. The actuarial assumptions include items such as the investment rate of return, salary growth of school employees, and demographics of the System's members, e.g. rates of retirement and mortality.

Defined Benefit Vs. Defined Contribution

- The Public School Employees' Retirement System (PSERS) is a defined benefit plan and therefore the amount of a member's pension benefit is not tied to the investment performance of the Fund. The member's pension benefit is based on a fixed formula that is defined by the Legislature in the Retirement Code. A defined benefit plan differs from most pension plans in the private sector, which are typically defined contribution plans, like a 401K plan or Individual Retirement Account (IRA). In a defined contribution plan, the member's pension benefit will fluctuate up and down with investment performance.

Who bears investment performance risk?

- In a defined benefit plan, the member's do not benefit when the investment performance of the fund is good. The Commonwealth and school employers' benefit as "employer" contributors to the System through a reduced employer contribution rate to the System.
- Likewise, PSERS' members do not bear the investment risk of a down market. Investment risk is borne by the Commonwealth and school employers through the employer contribution rate, which will rise when there is investment loss at the System during a down market.

Funding Sources for the System

PSERS is funded through three sources: contributions from employees (members), the employer contribution rate which is contributions from employers (generally school districts) and the Commonwealth, and investment returns from the System.

Employee (Member) Contributions

- Employee (Member) contributions range from 5.25% to 7.50% of payroll depending on the class of membership of the employee and when they joined PSERS. Employees currently contribute an average of 7.34% of their salary annually to help fund their retirement benefit.
- Projected employee (member) contributions for fiscal year 2010/2011 are approximately \$992 million.

Employer (School District and Commonwealth) Contributions

- Both the employer and the Commonwealth are responsible for paying a portion of the employer contribution rate. Employers are divided into two groups: school entities and non-school entities. School entities are responsible for paying 100 percent of the employer share of contributions to PSERS. The Commonwealth reimburses school entities for one-half the payment for employees hired on or before June 30, 1994. School entities are reimbursed by the Commonwealth based on a statutory formula for employees hired after June 30, 1994, but not less than one-half of the payment. Non-school entities and the Commonwealth each contribute one-half of the total employer rate. Total employer contributions for FY 2010/2011 are estimated at over \$1.11 billion.

- The employer contribution rate setting methodology is set forth in statute. The chart below shows the employer contribution rate history over the past 12 years.

HISTORY OF EMPLOYER CONTRIBUTION RATES				
Fiscal Year	Employer Normal Cost %	Preliminary Employer Pension Rate %	Health Care Contributions %	Total Employer Contribution %
97/98	6.44	8.61	0.15	8.76
98/99	6.33	5.89	0.15	6.04
99/00	6.40	4.36	0.25	4.61
00/01	6.29	1.64	0.30	1.94
01/02	5.63	0.00	1.09	1.09
02/03	7.20	0.18	0.97	1.15
03/04	7.25	2.98	0.79	3.77
04/05	7.48	4.00	0.23	4.23
05/06	7.61	4.00	0.69	4.69
06/07	6.62	5.72	0.74	6.46
07/08	6.68	6.44	0.69	7.13
08/09	6.68	4.00	0.76	4.76
09/10	7.35	4.00	0.78	4.78
10/11	8.08	7.58	0.64	8.22

- The chart below shows the 10-year projected employer contribution rates using the June 30, 2009 valuation.

10-YEAR PROJECTED EMPLOYER CONTRIBUTION RATES ¹ (Presumes an 8.0% rate of return)		
Fiscal Year Ending June	Total Employer Contribution Rate %	Projected Total Employer Contribution ((thousands) \$
10/11	8.22	1,110,522
11/12	10.59	1,474,219
12/13	29.22	4,191,703
13/14	32.09	4,748,570
14/15	33.60	5,134,130
15/16	33.27	5,254,834
16/17	32.74	5,350,132
17/18	32.06	5,426,711
18/19	31.27	5,490,282
19/20	30.42	5,546,198

Investment Returns

- PSERS actual rate of return for fiscal year ended June 30, 2009 was a negative 26.54% and the plan net assets decreased from \$62.7 billion at June 30, 2008 to \$43.2 billion at June 30, 2009.

About the Pennsylvania Public School Employees' Retirement System

PSERS is the 12th largest state-sponsored defined benefit pension fund in the nation. As of September 30, 2009 PSERS had total net assets of approximately \$46 billion and a membership of more than 279,000 active members and over 177,000 annuitants and beneficiaries receiving benefits. For more information visit PSERS' website at www.psers.state.pa.us

¹ The projection of contribution rates is based on the assumption that there are no changes in demographics or economic assumptions, no changes in benefit provisions, and no actuarial gains or losses other than gains or losses on the actuarial value of assets that result from recognizing currently deferred gains or losses on the market value of assets. Those assumptions may vary from actual experience and as a result projected employer contribution rates will increase or decrease.