

Financial state of the city

MESA



MONEY NEEDED
TO PAY BILLS:
\$787.7 MILLION



-\$6,100
TAXPAYER
BURDEN

THE FINANCIAL STATE OF MESA

Why did Mesa's reported pension debt increase by \$648.7 million this year?

Because of a new accounting rule, Mesa now has to report its pension debt on its balance sheet. As a result, the city's reported pension debt grew from \$0 in 2014 to \$648.7 million in 2015. However, the city is still hiding \$13 million of pension debt from taxpayers.

For years, Truth in Accounting has called for this financial reporting change, and we welcome the shift towards more transparent accounting.

The city's bills exceed its assets

| | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|
| Assets | \$3,838,477,000 |
| Minus: Capital assets | -\$2,787,011,000 |
| Restricted assets | -\$119,746,000 |
| Assets available to pay bills | \$931,720,000 |
| Minus: Bills | -\$1,719,453,000 |
| Money needed to pay bills | -\$787,733,000 |
| Each taxpayer's share of this debt | -\$6,100 |

Mesa has \$3.8 billion in assets, but most of these assets are not available to pay city bills.

The \$2.8 billion of capital assets, such as roads, buildings, and land should not be sold to pay bills. The use of \$119.7 million of the assets is restricted by law or contract.

That leaves \$931.7 million of the city's assets available to pay \$1.7 billion of bills as they come due.

The -\$787.7 million shortfall represents compensation and other costs incurred in prior years that should have been paid in those years. Instead these costs have been shifted to future taxpayers.



Truth in Accounting is committed to educating and empowering citizens with understandable, reliable, and transparent government financial information.

To be knowledgeable participants in their government and its budget process, citizens need to be provided with truthful and transparent financial information.

Key findings

- Mesa has only \$931.7 million available to pay \$1.7 billion worth of bills. Therefore, the city has a -\$787.7 million financial hole.
- Mesa has a taxpayer burden of -\$6,100, which is each taxpayer's share of the city's unfunded debt.
- Despite reporting most of its pension debt, the city still continues to hide much of its retiree health care debt. The city's total hidden debt is \$213.8 million.

The bills Mesa has accumulated

| | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Bonds | \$1,593,691,000 |
| Other liabilities | \$333,228,000 |
| Minus: Debt related to capital assets | -\$1,526,608,000 |
| Unfunded pension benefits | \$661,690,000 |
| Unfunded retiree health care benefits | \$657,452,000 |
| Bills | \$1,719,453,000 |

Despite the balanced budget requirement, the city has accumulated bonded debt of \$1.6 billion and other liabilities of \$333.2 million. The calculation of assets available to pay bills does not include capital assets, so \$1.5 billion of related debt is removed from the calculation of city bills.

Unfunded employees' retirement benefits represent 77% of city bills. These unfunded liabilities have accumulated because city employees have been promised \$661.7 million of pension benefits and \$657.5 million of retiree health care benefits, but the city has not adequately funded them.

Unless these pension and retiree health care benefits are renegotiated, future taxpayers will be burdened with paying for these benefits without receiving any corresponding government services or benefits.

Data is derived from the city of Mesa's June 30, 2015 audited Comprehensive Annual Financial Report and retirement plans' actuarial reports.

Number of taxpayers is based on an estimation of the city's population with a federal tax liability.

www.TruthInAccounting.org

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