

CONTACT: Courtney Fox  
(312) 589.5104/[cfox@truthinaccounting.org](mailto:cfox@truthinaccounting.org)

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**Chicago Owes \$36.4 Billion, Earns Failing Grade on Fiscal Report Card**  
*Windy City Finances are Still Mired in Debt*

CHICAGO — Government finance and transparency watchdog Truth in Accounting (TIA) released its [annual report](#) today on the fiscal health of the City of Chicago. This year's report found that Chicago owes \$36.4 billion, the majority of which can be attributed to unfunded retirement promises for municipal employees. TIA gathers its data from Chicago's audited [Comprehensive Annual Financial Report](#) (CAFR) and retirement plans' reports for the 2019 fiscal year.

Chicago's CAFR is due, according to state law, within six months of the fiscal year-end. Chicago's fiscal year ends on December 31. On June 30, 2020, the date on which it was due, the 2019 fiscal year CAFR was not publicly available on the city's website but appeared a few days later.

The level of Chicago's indebtedness assessed from the CAFR can be difficult to contextualize, which is why TIA calculates this number as a Taxpayer Burden™, or the amount of money each city taxpayer would have to contribute to city hall for the city to be debt-free. Chicago's Taxpayer Burden is a staggering \$39,400, which worsened by \$2,300 from the [previous fiscal year](#) largely due to increases in pension liabilities. And because Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Transit Authority are separate entities, their debt is not included in this analysis.

These new findings are notable for several reasons. First, Truth in Accounting's rigorous methodology cuts through common accounting gimmicks to present data free of political distortions. Second, Chicago will see a significant loss of revenue and increase in spending due to the coronavirus pandemic, which is something the city simply cannot afford.

"Chicago's financial condition worsened by \$2 billion in 2019 even though the mayor and city council claimed they had balanced the budget," said TIA founder and CEO Sheila Weinberg. "The city of Chicago was woefully underprepared for any crisis and the pandemic caused by the coronavirus will only further devastate the city's finances."

Fiscal accountability in U.S. politics often focuses on highly visible federal budgets or the national debt. Truth in Accounting has repeatedly found that poor budgeting and accounting practices at the city and state levels of government presents equally alarming threats, as these difficult times prove in spades.

*Founded in 2002, [Truth in Accounting](#) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to educating and empowering citizens with understandable, reliable, and transparent government financial information. Sheila Weinberg is a Certified Public Accountant with more than 30 years of experience in the field.*