



THE TRUTH

Money Needed to Pay Bills

- \$810 million

Taxpayer Burden™

- \$4,300

Financial Grade

C

Ranking

39 out of 75

Memphis Received ‘C’ Grade for Fiscal Health



January 2021

truthinaccounting.org | data-z.org

Financial State of Memphis, Tennessee

This report shows that Memphis went into the coronavirus pandemic in mediocre fiscal health, and it will probably come out of the crisis worse. Based upon the city’s fiscal year 2019 audited financial report, Memphis had a Taxpayer Burden™ of \$4,300, earning it a “C” grade from Truth in Accounting.

Memphis’s elected officials have repeatedly made financial decisions that have left the city with a debt burden of \$810 million. That burden equates to \$4,300 for every city taxpayer. Memphis’s financial problems stem mostly from unfunded retirement obligations that have accumulated over the years. Of the \$5.6 billion in retirement benefits promised, the city has not funded \$566.7 million in pension and \$684 million in retiree health care benefits.

Memphis did not have enough money set aside to weather the current pandemic and fluctuations in the market. The city is expected to lose some revenue as a result of the pandemic. The uncertainty surrounding this crisis makes it impossible to determine how much will be needed to maintain government services and benefits, but Memphis’s overall debt will most likely increase.

The data included in this report is derived from the city of Memphis’s 2019 audited Comprehensive Annual Financial Report and retirement plans’ reports. To compare cities’ financial information go to data-z.org.

Memphis Financial Breakdown

Fast Facts

- Memphis had \$1.7 billion available to pay \$2.5 billion worth of bills.
- The outcome was a \$810 million shortfall, which breaks down to a burden of \$4,300 per taxpayer.
- This means that each taxpayer would have to pay \$4,300 in future taxes for which they would receive no related services or benefits.

THE CITY’S BILLS EXCEEDED ITS ASSETS

Total assets	\$7,779,478,000
Minus: Capital assets	-\$5,291,619,000
Restricted assets	-\$759,723,000
Assets available to pay bills	\$1,728,136,000
Minus: Total bills	-\$2,538,162,000
Money available (needed) to pay bills	-\$810,026,000
Each taxpayer’s share of this burden	-\$4,300

BILLS THE CITY ACCUMULATED

Bonds	\$1,806,923,000
Other liabilities	\$2,115,897,000
Minus: Debt related to capital assets	-\$2,635,409,000
Unfunded pension benefits	\$566,746,000
Unfunded retiree health care benefits	\$684,005,000
Total bills	\$2,538,162,000

Grade:

C

Bottom line: Memphis would need \$4,300 from each of its taxpayers to pay all of its bills, so it has received a “C” for its finances. According to Truth in Accounting’s grading scale, any government with a Taxpayer Burden between \$0 and \$4,900 receives a “C.”

Truth in Accounting is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit 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 truthful and transparent financial information.