Montana Received ‘C’ Grade for its Fiscal Health

September 2020

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Financial State of Montana

This report shows that Montana did not go into the coronavirus pandemic in good fiscal shape, and it will probably come out of the crisis even worse. Based upon the state’s latest audited financial report, which is dated before the crisis began, Montana had a Taxpayer Burden™ of $2,000, earning it a “C” grade from Truth in Accounting.

Montana’s elected officials have made repeated financial decisions that left the state with a debt burden of $738.2 million. That burden equates to $2,000 for every state taxpayer. Montana’s financial problems stem mostly from unfunded retirement obligations that have accumulated over the years. Of the $10 billion in retirement benefits promised, the state did not fund $2.7 billion in pension and $95 million in retiree health care benefits.

Montana did not have enough money set aside to weather the current pandemic and fluctuations in the market. According to rough estimates by Truth in Accounting, Montana is projected to lose $1 billion in revenue as a result of this crisis. The uncertainty surrounding this crisis makes it impossible to determine how much will be needed to maintain government services and benefits, but Montana’s overall debt will most likely increase.

The data included in this report is derived from the state of Montana’s 2019 audited Comprehensive Annual Financial Report and retirement plans’ reports. To compare states’ financial information go to Data-Z.org.

Montana Financial Breakdown

Fast Facts

- Montana had $5.3 billion available to pay $6 billion worth of bills.
- The outcome was a $738.2 million shortfall, which breaks down to a burden of $2,000 per taxpayer.
- This means that each taxpayer would have to pay $2,000 in future taxes for which they would receive no related services or benefits.

THE STATE’S BILLS EXCEEDED ITS ASSETS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The State’s Bills Exceeded Its Assets</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total assets</td>
<td>$17,231,466,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minus: Capital assets</td>
<td>-$7,477,061,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted assets</td>
<td>-$4,487,208,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assets available to pay bills</td>
<td>$5,267,197,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minus: Total bills</td>
<td>-$6,005,407,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money available (needed) to pay bills</td>
<td>-$738,210,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each taxpayer’s share of this debt</td>
<td>-$2,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BILLS THE STATE ACCUMULATED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bills the State Accumulated</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bonds</td>
<td>$894,232,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other liabilities</td>
<td>$2,718,617,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minus: Debt related to capital assets</td>
<td>-$367,844,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfunded pension benefits</td>
<td>$2,665,357,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfunded retiree health care benefits</td>
<td>$95,045,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total bills</td>
<td>$6,005,407,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grade: C

Bottom line: Montana needed $2,000 from each of its taxpayers to pay all of its bills, so it 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.”

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