



RHODE ISLAND EARNS 'D' GRADE FOR ITS FINANCES

September 2018
truthinaccounting.org

THE FINANCIAL STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

A new analysis of the latest available audited financial reports found Rhode Island has a Taxpayer Burden™ of \$14,500, earning it a "D" grade based on Truth in Accounting's grading scale.

Rhode Island's elected officials have made repeated financial decisions that have left the state with a debt burden of \$5.5 billion, according to the analysis. That burden equates to \$14,500 for every state taxpayer. Rhode Island's financial problems stem mostly from unfunded retirement obligations that have accumulated over many years. Of the \$8.7 billion in retirement benefits promised, the state has not funded \$3.6 billion in pension and \$701.4 million in retiree health care benefits.

Rhode Island's financial condition is not only alarming but also misleading as government officials have failed to disclose significant amounts of retirement debt on the state's balance sheet. Residents and taxpayers have been presented with an unreliable and inaccurate accounting of the state government's finances.

Here's the truth:

35

Rank

**\$5.5
billion**

Money needed to
pay bills

-\$14,500

Taxpayer
Burden

D

Financial grade

Data included in this report is derived from the state of Rhode Island's 2017 audited Comprehensive Annual Financial Report and retirement plans' actuarial reports.

RHODE ISLAND FINANCIAL BREAKDOWN

FAST FACTS

- + Rhode Island has \$5.2 billion available in assets to pay \$10.7 billion worth of bills.
- + The outcome is a \$5.5 billion shortfall and a \$14,500 Taxpayer Burden.
- + Despite reporting all of its pension debt, the state continues to hide \$620.7 million of its retiree health care debt.
- + Rhode Island's reported net position is inflated by \$512 million, largely because the state defers recognizing losses incurred when the net pension liability increases.

THE STATE'S BILLS EXCEED ITS ASSETS

Assets	\$14,130,405,000
<i>Minus:</i> Capital assets	-\$6,416,347,000
Restricted assets	-\$2,522,402,000
Assets available to pay bills	\$5,191,656,000
<i>Minus:</i> Bills	-\$10,712,604,000
Money needed to pay bills	-\$5,520,948,000
Each taxpayer's share of this debt	-\$14,500

BILLS THE STATE HAS ACCUMULATED

Bonds	\$5,710,483,000
Other liabilities	\$2,578,398,000
<i>Minus:</i> Debt related to capital assets	-\$1,892,804,000
Unfunded pension benefits	\$3,615,167,000
Unfunded retiree health care	\$701,360,000
Bills	\$10,712,604,000

GRADE: D

Bottom line: Rhode Island does not have enough money to pay its bills, so it has received a "D" for its finances from Truth in Accounting. A "D" grade is given to states with a Taxpayer Burden between \$5,000 and \$20,000. Because of Rhode Island's balanced budget requirement, its Taxpayer Burden should be \$0.

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 truthful and transparent financial information.