



THE TRUTH

Money Needed to Pay Bills

\$4.1 Billion

Taxpayer Burden™

\$10,200

Financial Grade

D

Ranking

36 out of 50

Rhode Island Received a 'D' Grade for Fiscal Health



October 2022

truthinaccounting.org | data-z.org

Financial State of Rhode Island

Rhode Island's latest financial report indicated the state's financial position improved in 2021 mostly due to a great deal of federal aid and dramatic increases in the value of pension system assets. But the state still needed \$4.1 billion to pay the bills it had accumulated. The resulting Taxpayer Burden™ was \$10,200, which represents each taxpayer's share of the state's debt. Therefore, the state earned a "D" grade from Truth in Accounting.

Rhode Island's financial problems stem mostly from unfunded retirement obligations. Record gains in the stock market in 2021 made funding levels of the state's pension system appear healthier than in 2020, but much of that improvement is fading. Markets have lost an average of 14% value in 2022. Although pension liabilities decreased by \$897 million in 2021 due to the increase in investment value, much of the value increase is only on paper. Until the pension investments are sold, these liability decreases are not real. Given these facts, the state's overall debt situation will likely further deteriorate over the coming year.

Even with these reported increases in pension assets, Rhode Island had only set aside 65 cents for every dollar of promised pension benefits and 17 cents for every dollar of promised retiree health care benefits. If benefits and funding are not changed, future taxpayers will be burdened with paying the under-funded retirement promises.

The data included in this report is derived from the State of Rhode Island's 2021 audited Annual Comprehensive Financial Report and retirement plans' reports. To compare state financial, demographic and economic information go to Data-Z.org.



UNIVERSITY of
DENVER

DANIELS COLLEGE OF BUSINESS
School of Accountancy

Rhode Island's Financial Breakdown

Fast Facts

- Rhode Island had \$7.9 billion available to pay \$12 billion worth of bills.
- The outcome was a \$4.1 billion shortfall, which breaks down to a burden of \$10,200 per taxpayer.
- The Employees' Retirement System of Rhode Island recognized \$2.6 billion in net investment gains. The state also received federal Covid-related funding. These increases allowed Rhode Island to experience an improvement in financial condition.

THE STATE'S BILLS EXCEEDED ITS ASSETS

Total assets	\$18,041,291,000
Minus: Capital assets	-\$7,542,689,000
Restricted assets	-\$2,603,256,000
Assets available to pay bills	\$7,895,346,000
Minus: Total bills*	-\$12,011,947,000
Money needed to pay bills	\$4,116,601,000
Each taxpayer's share of this burden	\$10,200

* BREAKDOWN OF TOTAL BILLS

Bonds	\$6,019,592,000
Other liabilities	\$4,305,562,000
Minus: Debt related to capital assets	-\$1,852,748,000
Unfunded pension benefits	\$3,079,567,000
Unfunded retiree health care benefits	\$459,974,000
Total bills	\$12,011,947,000

Grade:

D

Bottom line: Rhode Island would need \$10,200 from each of its taxpayers to pay all of its bills, so it received a "D" for its finances. According to Truth in Accounting's grading scale, any government with a Taxpayer Burden between \$5,000 and \$20,000 receives a "D."

Truth in Accounting is a 501(c)(3) organization 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.