Vermont in Poor Fiscal Health Prior to Pandemic

This report shows that Vermont went into the coronavirus pandemic in poor fiscal health, 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, Vermont had a Taxpayer Burden™ of $18,900, earning it a “D” grade from Truth in Accounting.

Vermont’s elected officials have made repeated financial decisions that left the state with a debt burden of $4.5 billion. That burden equates to $18,900 for every state taxpayer. Vermont’s financial problems stem mostly from unfunded retirement obligations that have accumulated over the years. Of the $9.2 billion in retirement benefits promised, the state did not fund $2.4 billion in pension and $2.9 billion in retiree health care benefits.

Vermont 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, Vermont 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 Vermont’s overall debt will most likely increase.

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

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