

Sunday, May 1, 2011

Editorial: Don't balk

Lawmakers shouldn't dodge need to reform the public pensions

As lawmakers put their stamp on Gov. John Kasich's budget plan, they should be prepared to make the tough decisions necessary to set the state on a sustainable path. Given the huge impact of public-employee compensation and retirement benefits on government budgets at all levels, these must be an area of reform. Already, though, some lawmakers are going wobbly at the prospect of calling for changes that will be unpopular with public employees and organized labor.

Kasich's budget would provide some fiscal relief to state and local governments by shifting more of the responsibility for retirement savings to employees. Employees would contribute an additional 2 percent of their salaries, while the agencies or local governments would pay that much less. House Republicans on Thursday proposed removing this provision, and possibly inserting it later in separate bills that deal with changes to the state's public-pension systems.

The provision would save state agencies, local governments and school districts \$458 million over two years. Lawmakers shouldn't let it fall by the wayside.

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