

This afternoon the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) voted to approve two new accounting standards that substantively improve the accounting and financial reporting of public employee pensions by state and local governments. These improvements provide citizens and other users with a clearer picture of the size and nature of the financial obligations to current and former employees.

The provisions in Statement No. 67 are effective for financial statements for periods beginning after June 15, 2013. The provisions in Statement No. 68 are effective for fiscal years beginning after June 15, 2014. Statements 67 and 68 will be available for download at no cost from the GASB website by July 27.

A full version of the press release is included below for your review. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Statement No. 68 - Accounting and Financial Reporting for Pensions:

This statement requires governments providing defined benefit pensions to recognize their long-term obligation for pension benefits as a liability for the first time, and to more comprehensively and comparably measure the annual costs of pension benefits. The Statement also enhances accountability and transparency through revised and new note disclosures and required supplementary information (RSI).

Statement No. 67 - Financial Reporting for Pension Plans:

This statement builds upon the existing framework for financial reports of defined benefit pension plans, which includes a statement of fiduciary net position (the amount held in a trust for paying retirement benefits) and a statement of changes in fiduciary net position. Statement 67 enhances note disclosures and RSI for both defined benefit and defined contribution pension plans. Statement 67 also requires the presentation of new information about annual money-weighted rates of return in the notes to the financial statements and in 10-year RSI schedules.

Best,

Jason

**GOVERNMENTAL ACCOUNTING STANDARDS
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GASB Improves Pension Accounting and Financial Reporting Standards

Norwalk, CT, June 25, 2012—The Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) today voted to approve two new standards that will substantially improve the accounting and financial reporting of

public employee pensions by state and local governments. Statement No. 67, *Financial Reporting for Pension Plans*, revises existing guidance for the financial reports of most pension plans. Statement No. 68, *Accounting and Financial Reporting for Pensions*, revises and establishes new financial reporting requirements for most governments that provide their employees with pension benefits.

“The new standards will improve the way state and local governments report their pension liabilities and expenses, resulting in a more faithful representation of the full impact of these obligations,” said GASB Chairman Robert H. Attmore. “Among other improvements, net pension liabilities will be reported on the balance sheet, providing citizens and other users of these financial reports with a clearer picture of the size and nature of the financial obligations to current and former employees for past services rendered.”

Pension plans are distinguished for financial reporting purposes in two ways. First, plans are classified by whether the income or other benefits that the employee will receive at or after separation from employment are defined by the benefit terms (a defined benefit plan) or whether the pensions an employee will receive will depend only on the contributions to the employee’s account, actual earnings on investments of those contributions, and other factors (a defined contribution plan).

In addition, defined benefit plans are classified based on the number of governments participating in a particular pension plan and whether assets and obligations are shared among the participating governments. Categories include plans where only one employer participates (single employer); plans in which assets are pooled for investment purposes, but each employer’s share of the pooled assets is legally available to pay the benefits of only its employees (agent employer); and plans in which participating employers pool or share obligations to provide pensions to their employees and plan assets can be used to pay the benefits of employees of any participating employer (cost-sharing employer).

Statement 68 (Employers)

Statement 68 replaces the requirements of Statement No. 27, *Accounting for Pensions by State and Local Governmental Employers* and Statement No. 50, *Pension Disclosures*, as they relate to governments that provide pensions through pension plans administered as trusts or similar arrangements that meet certain criteria. Statement 68 requires governments providing defined benefit pensions to recognize their long-term obligation for pension benefits as a liability for the first time, and to more comprehensively and comparably measure the annual costs of pension benefits. The Statement also enhances accountability and transparency through revised and new note disclosures and required supplementary information (RSI).

Defined Benefit Pension Plans. The Statement requires governments that participate in defined benefit pension plans to report in their statement of net position a net pension liability. The net pension liability is the difference between the total pension liability (the present value of projected benefit payments to employees based on their past service) and the assets (mostly investments reported at fair value) set aside in a trust and restricted to paying benefits to current employees, retirees, and their beneficiaries.

The Statement calls for immediate recognition of more pension expense than is currently required. This includes immediate recognition of annual service cost and interest on the pension liability and immediate recognition of the effect on the net pension liability of changes in benefit terms. Other components of pension expense will be recognized over a closed period

that is determined by the average remaining service period of the plan members (both current and former employees, including retirees). These other components include the effects on the net pension liability of (a) changes in economic and demographic assumptions used to project benefits and (b) differences between those assumptions and actual experience. Lastly, the effects on the net pension liability of differences between expected and actual investment returns will be recognized in pension expense over a closed five-year period.

Statement 68 requires cost-sharing employers to record a liability and expense equal to their proportionate share of the collective net pension liability and expense for the cost-sharing plan. The Statement also will improve the comparability and consistency of how governments calculate the pension liabilities and expense. These changes include:

- **Projections of Benefit Payments.** Projections of benefit payments to employees will be based on the then-existing benefit terms and incorporate projected salary changes and projected service credits (if they are factors in the pension formula), as well as projected automatic postemployment benefit changes (those written into the benefit terms), including automatic cost-of-living-adjustments (COLAs). For the first time, projections also will include ad hoc postemployment benefit changes (those not written into the benefit terms), including ad hoc COLAs, if they are considered to be substantively automatic.
- **Discount Rate.** The rate used to discount projected benefit payments to their present value will be based on a single rate that reflects (a) the long-term expected rate of return on plan investments as long as the plan net position is projected under specific conditions to be sufficient to pay pensions of current employees and retirees and the pension plan assets are expected to be invested using a strategy to achieve that return; and (b) a yield or index rate on tax-exempt 20-year, AA-or-higher rated municipal bonds to the extent that the conditions for use of the long-term expected rate of return are not met.
- **Attribution Method.** Governments will use a single actuarial cost allocation method – “entry age,” with each period’s service cost determined as a level percentage of pay.

Note Disclosures and Required Supplementary Information. Statement 68 also requires employers to present more extensive note disclosures and RSI, including disclosing descriptive information about the types of benefits provided, how contributions to the pension plan are determined, and assumptions and methods used to calculate the pension liability. Single and agent employers will disclose additional information, such as the composition of the employees covered by the benefit terms and the sources of changes in the components of the net pension liability for the current year. A single or agent employer will also will present RSI schedules covering the past 10 years regarding:

- Sources of changes in the components of the net pension liability
- Ratios that assist in assessing the magnitude of the net pension liability
- Comparisons of actual employer contributions to the pension plan with actuarially determined contribution requirements, if an employer has actuarially determined contributions.

Cost-sharing employers also will present the RSI schedule of net pension liability, information about contractually required contributions, and related ratios.

Defined Contribution Pensions. The existing standards for governments that provide defined contribution pensions are largely carried forward in the new Statement. These governments will recognize pension expenses equal to the amount of contributions or credits to employees' accounts, absent forfeited amounts. A pension liability will be recognized for the difference between amounts recognized as expense and actual contributions made to a defined contribution pension plan.

Special Funding Situations. Certain governments are legally responsible for making contributions directly to a pension plan that is used to provide pensions to the employees of another government. For example, a state is legally required to contribute to a pension plan that covers local school districts' teachers. In specific circumstances called special funding situations, the Statement requires governments that are nonemployer contributing entities to recognize in their own financial statements their proportionate share of the other governmental employers' net pension liability and pension expense.

Statement 67 (Plans)

This Statement replaces the requirements of Statement No. 25, *Financial Reporting for Defined Benefit Pension Plans and Note Disclosures for Defined Contribution Plans* and Statement 50 as they relate to pension plans that are administered through trusts or similar arrangements meeting certain criteria. The Statement builds upon the existing framework for financial reports of defined benefit pension plans, which includes a statement of fiduciary net position (the amount held in a trust for paying retirement benefits) and a statement of changes in fiduciary net position. Statement 67 enhances note disclosures and RSI for both defined benefit and defined contribution pension plans. Statement 67 also requires the presentation of new information about annual money-weighted rates of return in the notes to the financial statements and in 10-year RSI schedules.

Effective Dates and Availability

The provisions in Statement 67 are effective for financial statements for periods beginning after June 15, 2013. The provisions in Statement 68 are effective for fiscal years beginning after June 15, 2014. Earlier application is encouraged for both Statements.

Statements 67 and 68 will be available for download at no cost from the [GASB website](#) in early August. Bound copies of the Statements will be available for distribution soon thereafter. A plain-language description of the new requirements also will be available on the [GASB website](#).

About the Governmental Accounting Standards Board

The GASB is the independent, not-for-profit organization formed in 1984 that establishes and improves financial accounting and reporting standards for state and local governments. Its seven members are drawn from the Board's diverse constituency, including preparers and auditors of government financial statements, users of those statements, and members of the academic community. More information about the GASB can be found at its website, www.gasb.org.

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