



MEDIA RELEASE

Interactive "Open Government" Pension Website Launched

Questions Remain About Information Not Provided
[Go to RIOpenGov.org](http://RIOpenGov.org)

October 27, 2011

Providence, RI - The Rhode Island Center for Freedom and Prosperity launched today an 'open government' website that adds detailed new information to the current pension reform debate in the Ocean State.

The website, www.RIOpenGov.org, is an interactive online database of public employee pension data for current ERSRI retirees. The data, which can be viewed in both table and graph modes, was provided by ERSRI (the Employees' Retirement System of Rhode Island) through an open records request. The website was developed by Visible Government Online.

The information for 26,598 pensioners can be sorted or searched by name, retirement year, benefit type, 2010 gross pension, and disability type, among many other criteria. The website breaks out base annual pension as well as the COLA portion, and also estimates future payments - both with and without a COLA.

"Our Center has invested in this tool as part of our open government agenda because we feel it is important that complete transparency be provided to the public for this crucial debate about the future well-being of our state pensioners and for our state and local economies. All Rhode Islanders may be affected by the pending reform and have a right to know how their tax dollars are being spent", said Mike Stenhouse, CEO for the Center for Freedom. "Once you browse the wealth of data on our site, you will see that it is not fair to paint all pensioners with a single brush. Citizens will now be able to make their own judgments as to whether or not certain retiree benefits are essential to sustaining a reasonable level of retirement or if they may seem excessive."

According to Michael Walker, President of Visible Government Online, which has also developed pension websites for other states in New England, the average Rhode Island pension payment in 2010 was \$31,388 (including COLA): In Massachusetts the average payment was \$29,043, while in Maine it was \$20,270.

The website provides a tool where visitors can change the COLA assumption and view the effect on estimated future payments. As various reform provisions are debated,

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