



# EPIC-MRA Press Release – Poll Findings on School Employee Retirement Changes in Budget Negotiations

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**EPIC-MRA Statewide Survey – 600 sample – 4% error rate  
Conducted by live callers from August 17-21, 2019  
Includes 30% cell phones**

Commissioned by Coalition for Secure Retirement – <http://www.csr-mi.com/>

## **Key poll findings**

**77% say it's essential/very important for the Legislature & Governor Whitmer to make sure road funding plans do not risk funding for teacher retirement pensions**

**70% say teachers are paid too little (47% much too little)**

**38% say benefits teachers receive, including health insurance & retirement benefits, are “too little” with 38% saying “about right”**

**76% oppose plan to eliminate 6 cent sales tax on fuel and replace it with a 15 cent per gallon gas tax increase with all funding going to roads instead of schools & local governments**

**63% oppose road funding concept of bonding school employee retirement**

**65% oppose extending payment plan (reamortization) of unfunded pension liability**

In a poll commissioned by the Coalition for Secure Retirement, Michigan voters strongly oppose ideas that use Michigan's school employee pension system as solutions to the ongoing road funding debate.

Michigan voters think teachers are paid too little and have either too little or about the right amount of benefits, including health insurance and retirement benefits.

They want Governor Whitmer and the Legislature to make sure any plans to fix the roads does not risk funding for teacher retirement.

About two-thirds of voters oppose the concepts of either bonding or extending payment plans (reamortization) of pension debt.

Here are the specifics:

## Michigan voters want teacher pensions protected

All respondents were asked:

How important do you think it is for the legislature and Governor Whitmer to make sure that any plan to fund road improvements does not risk future funding provided to teachers for their retirement pensions – is it essential that teacher retirement funding is protected, very important but not essential, only somewhat important, or not important at all?

- 47% Essential
- 30% Very important but not essential
- 77% TOTAL IMPORTANT**
- 13% Only somewhat important
- 8% Not important at all
- 2% Undecided/refused

<b>Partisan Breakdown</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>Dems</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>Gop</b>	<b>Dem Men</b>	<b>Dem Wom</b>	<b>Ind Men</b>	<b>Ind Wom</b>	<b>Gop Men</b>	<b>Gop Wom</b>
Essential	47	59	53	34	57	60	52	54	34	34
Very important	30	26	32	33	30	24	30	33	30	36
<b>Total Important</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>70</b>
Smwt to Not Imp	21	13	14	31	9	15	17	10	32	30

## 7-in-10 Michigan voters say teachers are paid too little

All respondents were asked:

Thinking specifically about the pay in salary and wages that teachers currently receive, do you think teachers are paid too much, too little, or about the right amount? **[IF TOO MUCH/TOO LITTLE, ASK: “Would that be much or somewhat?” AND CODE BEST RESPONSE]**

2%	Much too much
2%	Somewhat too much
<b>4%</b>	<b>TOTAL TOO MUCH</b>
19%	About right
<b>70%</b>	<b>TOTAL TOO LITTLE</b>
23%	Somewhat too little
47%	Much too little
7%	Undecided/Refused

Partisan Breakdown	Dem				Ind		Gop			
	All	Dems	Ind	Gop	Men	Wom	Men	Wom		
Too much	4	2	6	6	2	2	9	3	7	5
About right	19	10	19	30	5	13	24	13	34	26
<b>Too little</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>64</b>
Undecided	7	4	9	7	6	3	11	8	9	6

The 70 percent of Michigan voters saying teachers are paid “too little” is the highest percentage registered in six years of EPIC-MRA polling. The percentages saying “too little” was 29% in 2011, 32% in 2010, 40% in 2009, 45% in 2014, and 57% in 2017. The lowest percentages were reported during the most challenging years of the economic recession.

## Nearly 8-in-10 voters say teachers receive “too little” or “the right amount” of benefits

All respondents were asked:

Thinking specifically about the benefits teachers receive, including health insurance and retirement benefits, do you think teachers receive too much, too little, or about the right amount of benefits as part of their job? **[IF TOO MUCH/TOO LITTLE, ASK: “Would that be much or somewhat?”]**

3%	Much too much
4%	Somewhat too much
<b>7%</b>	<b>TOTAL TOO MUCH</b>
38%	About right
<b>38%</b>	<b>TOTAL TOO LITTLE</b>
15%	Somewhat too little
23%	Much too little
17%	Undecided/Refused

Partisan Breakdown					Dem	Dem	Ind	Ind	Gop	Gop
	All	Dems	Ind	Gop	Men	Wom	Men	Wom	Men	Wom
Too much	7	4	6	10	6	2	7	5	11	8
About right	38	31	36	45	25	35	39	33	46	44
<b>Too little</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>27</b>
Undecided	17	13	24	20	11	15	22	26	19	21

The 38 percent of Michigan voters saying teachers receive “too little” benefits is also the highest percentage registered in six years of EPIC-MRA polling on the question. The percentages saying “too little” was 12% in 2010, 13% in 2009 and 2011, 24% in 2014 and 29% in 2017. Again, the lowest percentages were reported during the most difficult years of the economic recession.

### **3-in-4 voters oppose plan to replace 6 cent sales tax with 15 cent per gallon gas tax increase, with all funding going to roads instead of \$800 million to schools & local governments**

All respondents were asked:

The Speaker of the Michigan House Lee Chatfield says he will not discuss any plan for road funding that does not eliminate the 6-cent sales tax on fuel. Right now, the 6-cent state sales tax motorists pay at the pump generates about \$800 million per year, with about \$550 million of it dedicated to funding for public schools, and the rest going to local governments through the state’s revenue sharing plan. One plan proposed by Chatfield would see the sales tax at the pump replaced by a 15 cent per gallon increase in the gas tax - estimated to be equal to the \$800 million raised by the sales tax - with all of that money going toward the roads. If approved, the \$800 million per year in funding that schools and local governments currently receive would be lost unless it is replaced with some other source of state funds.

Based on this description, do you favor or oppose eliminating the 6-cent sales tax on gasoline purchases and replacing it with a 15 cent per gallon increase in the gas tax, with all of the funding going to roads instead of schools and local governments? **[IF FAVOR/OPPOSE, ASK: “Would that be strongly or somewhat?”]**

- 8% Strongly favor
- 7% Somewhat favor
- 15% TOTAL FAVOR**
- 76% TOTAL OPPOSE**
- 18% Somewhat oppose
- 58% Strongly oppose
- 9% Undecided/Don’t know

<b>Partisan Breakdown</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>Dems</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>Gop</b>	<b>Dem Men</b>	<b>Dem Wom</b>	<b>Ind Men</b>	<b>Ind Wom</b>	<b>Gop Men</b>	<b>Gop Wom</b>
Total favor	15	13	13	17	18	9	15	10	18	15
Total oppose	76	78	80	74	76	79	76	85	73	75
Undecided	9	10	7	10	6	12	9	5	9	10



## Over 6-in-10 oppose plan to issue \$10 billion in bonds to pre-fund teacher retirement to help pay for roads

All respondents were asked:

Two plans are currently under consideration to replace the \$800 million lost by public schools and local governments if the 6-cent state sales tax on gasoline is eliminated and replaced with a 15 cent per gallon increase in the gas tax only for roads... [ROTATE Q.26 AND Q.27]

Under (one/another) plan, the state would issue \$10 billion in bonds to be re-paid over 30 years to pre-fund the teacher retirement system. This borrowed money would be repaid by investing the influx of cash received from the sale of the bonds. Based on current market estimates, the revenue generated by investing \$10 billion in bond funds would be more than enough to replace the lost funding for schools and local governments caused by the elimination of the 6-cent sales tax on gasoline purchases. However, this estimate assumes the return on investment will be enough to fund the teacher retirement system AND make the payments required to repay the bonds over the next 30 years. If returns on the bond revenue are lower than projected because of economic downturns, it could jeopardize future teacher retirement funding, or cost taxpayers if losses have to be replaced. Thinking about this, do you favor or oppose the idea of having the state issue \$10 billion in bonds to pre-fund the teacher retirement system, and also replace the money lost by schools and local governments due to the elimination of the 6-cent sales tax on gasoline purchases? [IF FAVOR/OPPOSE, ASK: "Would that be strongly or somewhat?"]

6% Strongly favor  
 18% Somewhat favor  
**24% TOTAL FAVOR**  
**63% TOTAL OPPOSE**  
 18% Somewhat oppose  
 45% Strongly oppose  
 13% Undecided/Refused

Partisan Breakdown					Dem	Dem	Ind	Ind	Gop	Gop
	All	Dems	Ind	Gop	Men	Wom	Men	Wom	Men	Wom
Total favor	24	26	19	22	24	28	26	10	22	21
Total oppose	63	60	72	66	65	56	63	82	68	64
Undecided	13	14	9	12	11	16	11	8	10	15

**2-in-3 oppose plan to extend repayment period to pay off unfunded debt of teacher retirement (reamortization) as another potential road funding idea**

All respondents were asked:

Under (one/another) plan, road funding could be increased by extending the repayment period to pay off the unfunded debt of the teacher retirement system. Under Governor Snyder, a plan to fill a \$30 billion deficit in the teacher retirement system was put in place that would eliminate the liability by the year 2038. If the payment schedule were extended five or ten years, the lower required payments would free up funding to backfill the lost gas sales tax revenue – ranging from \$500 to \$800 million per year. However, extending the payment schedule five or ten years would cost taxpayers between \$11 to \$23 billion in additional long-term costs. Thinking about this, do you favor the idea of extending the repayment period for paying off the unfunded debt of the teacher retirement system, or, do you oppose it? [IF FAVOR/OPPOSE, ASK: “Would that be strongly or somewhat?” AND CODE BEST RESPONSE]

- 4% Strongly favor
- 15% Somewhat favor
- 19% TOTAL FAVOR**
- 65% TOTAL OPPOSE**
- 21% Somewhat oppose
- 44% Strongly oppose
- 16% Undecided/Refused

Partisan Breakdown					Dem	Dem	Ind	Ind	Gop	Gop
	All	Dems	Ind	Gop	Men	Wom	Men	Wom	Men	Wom
Total favor	19	23	20	16	28	19	22	18	15	16
Total oppose	65	65	65	67	59	69	67	62	72	60
Undecided	16	12	15	17	13	12	11	21	12	24

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