

# San Jose mayor pledges to push pension reform effort on 2016 ballot

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ACRAMENTO -- San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed on Thursday affirmed his commitment to put a highly controversial pension reform initiative before voters in 2016, despite recent legal setbacks that have threatened the plan's viability.

"We have not stopped working on this. We will not give up," Reed told a gathering during a speech to the Sacramento Press Club.

Reed and a few other California city leaders want to make it legal for local governments to reduce the pension benefits going forward for public sector employees such as police officers, firefighters and teachers.

They believe the costs of those benefits have become crushing in recent years and that there's no other way to stop the bleeding. For example, between 2001 and 2011, the money San Jose spent on public employees' retirement rose from \$75 million to \$245 million annually, Reed said.



San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed, June 2013. (LiPo Ching, Bay Area News Group)

He had hoped to see his pension reform proposal on the November ballot, but his signature gathering efforts stalled when he took issue with Attorney General Kamala Harris' official description of the proposal. In a lawsuit, Reed called the wording "false and misleading."

A Sacramento County Superior Court judge ruled against Reed, but he has filed an appeal.

Reed and other mayors who support the initiative have been heavily criticized by labor, law enforcement and teachers unions for trying to strip public sector workers of the lucrative benefits they were promised when they agreed to take public jobs.

"Mayor Reed's radical ballot measure failed for one reason: Californians do not want to eliminate retirement security of public servants," said Steve Maviglio, a spokesman for unions that oppose the plan.

Reed conceded that the changes he backs are not necessarily fair, but he called his plan the fairest among a set of poor options.

"Is it fair to taxpayers to cut services year after year to balance the budget? Is it fair to cut retirees' benefits after they've retired?" Reed said. "This is a reasonably fair solution. There is no perfect solution."

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