

The proposals provide an overall boost to the concept of saving for retirement, which studies show has declined in this nation for some time.

The not-so-good news is that when the Congress actually has a meaningful debate on retirement security that groups like the Arnold Foundation will have an opening to change strategy and make a huge push to urge the Congress to include public plans in the debate on retirement security. Given the Arnold Foundation's persistent, well-funded, and well-orchestrated campaign to discredit public plan funding status, they could use the debate on retirement security as an opportunity to ask the Congress to investigate public plans by emphasizing the recent problems in some states and cities like Detroit. The recent Rockefeller report and the Reasons report serve as recent examples of their efforts.

Some recent good news is the public setback the Arnold Foundation experienced when it was discovered that they had made a \$3.5 million donation to the PBS flagship station WNET to launch a two-year news series entitled, "The Pension Peril." According to the reporter that investigated the Arnold relationship with PBS, the series is intended to focus on the Arnold Foundation agenda, which is to attack public employees and their defined benefit retirement plans.

PBS rules clearly prohibit the funding of programming by a benefactor who "has asserted, or has the right to assert editorial control over a program." The rules do not allow programming to be funded by a benefactor who is "pre-ordaining the conclusion the viewer should draw from the materials presented."

Since the story broke about the PBS-Arnold relationship, PBS has returned the money to the Arnold Foundation, saying that they thought they had been following the guidelines, but that "we made a mistake, pure and simple." At the same time, PBS says they stand behind WNET's reporting on the issue. Of course, the Arnold Foundation denies having editorial control of the news content. The story goes on and on.

For public plan administrators across the country, the bottom line should be clear: this is only a temporary setback to the Arnold Foundation, and that its actions with PBS strongly underscore their commitment. It should be expected that their commitment will only grow. If the fallout from the new GASB reporting requirements turns out to be as negative as many believe will be the case, expect the Arnold Foundation, and those sharing similar beliefs, to escalate their efforts.

DEATH MASTER FILE

There has been no movement of any kind on the DMF legislation, as House Ways and Means staff continues to wait for an opportunity to find a must-pass bill that could serve as a vehicle. Unfortunately, when the leadership of both parties agreed to a clean debt ceiling bill, that legislation was ruled out as a possible vehicle.

GASB

In late January, GASB released an implementation guide for its new pension standards. The guide addresses issues related to GASB Statement 68. Among topics discussed in the guide are the following:

- The scope and applicability of Statement 68
- Considerations regarding the identification of special funding situations
- Measurement of defined benefit pension liabilities of employer and non-employer contributing entities
- Fiscal Note disclosures and required supplementary information
- Unique issues related to cost-sharing employers and certain non-employer contributing entities
- Transition to the new standards