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## Newsroom: Yelnosky on State Pension Lawsuit

Roger Williams University School of Law

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# Newsroom

## Yelnosky on State Pension Lawsuit

Dean Yelnosky explains to WJAR the astronomical stakes and costs involved in the pension reform lawsuit, which will impact all Rhode Islanders.

**From Turn to 10, WJAR:** ["Digging Deeper: Billions of dollars hinge on pension settlement"](#) by Bill Rapple, NBC 10 Political Reporter

**PROVIDENCE, March 18, 2015:** The pension reform lawsuit will impact not just former state workers and teachers. The outcome will affect all Rhode Islanders. [...]

The astronomical costs of the stakes in this case could very well affect any judicial action, **said Michael Yelnosky, dean of the Roger Williams School of Law.**

"I do think that the amount of money that's at stake does have something to do with the way the court will analyze the case and the way I would expect a jury of Rhode Island taxpayers to consider the case,"

**Yelnosky said.**

Partly, that's because the case requires the state demonstrate fiscal need to adjust any pension benefits. But there is also the small matter of handing a bill to the state that it cannot pay.

Legal precedent is also causing both sides to hope for a settlement. If either one lost, any future standing to legally object or create changes in pensions would be compromised.

The state could find out courts consider pensions part of a contract that can't be changed. Or the unions could lose, and **Yelnosky said** that could mean "the legislature has the green light to alter pension rights as they see fit." [...]