

GOLDEN: Legislative solution to pension crisis fades

Carl Golden 3:39 p.m. EDT April 27, 2015

For the dwindling number of optimists clinging to the hope that the state's public pension funding crisis can be resolved, events of the past week were deeply discouraging. cted the following

The Legislature approved a budget including a \$2.25 billion appropriation to the pension fund by increasing the income tax on wealthy wage and in the corporate business tax. The governor vetoed the appropriation and the taxes because he felt the wealthy and businesses are already ed.

rats understood they could not muster the votes to override the vetoes because Republicans would remain united in support of the governor, no choice but to enact a budget setting the pension payment at the level recommended by Christie. The failure to override, the administration said antly, was conclusive proof Democrats were responsible for the underfunding.

other way, the governor cut the Democrats off at the knees and then ridiculed them because they were limping.

President Steve Sweeney took offense at the governor's version of events and reiterated his party's position that full funding was a non- ble issue and the governor's proposed reform package wouldn't be considered until that matter was settled.

ey also pledged that the Legislature would approve a budget with the full pension contribution, presumably with a tax increase on the wealthy as a the package.

There is a case to be made that spending on pensions and benefits is reaching an unsustainable level and significant changes are crucial. Freezing pensions at current levels and turning to a 401(k)-like system, scaling back health benefits to a less expensive model, requiri