



Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Mayors Join to Oppose Last-Minute Collective Bargaining Legislation

Ads on Local Radio Deliver the Message to Taxpayers – “You know where this going – right into your wallet!”

Providence, RI (June 29, 2017) – Municipal leaders from across Rhode Island joined together today to oppose legislation automatically extending collective bargaining agreements for municipal employees and teachers. The bill, H5593, has passed the House Labor Committee and is in consideration for passage just days before the expected end of the legislative session. The leaders also expressed opposition to costly legislation that expand disability benefits, costing taxpayers millions.

In an event at Warwick City Hall, Brian Daniels, Executive Director of the RI League of Cities and Towns, stated “Automatic contract extension would create an imbalanced system that hurts municipalities. We urge our leaders at the State House to reject this bill.”

The event comes just over a week after the group sent a letter to Speaker of the House Nicholas Mattiello and Senate President Dominick Ruggerio expressing strong opposition to the legislation and seeking the promotion of fair labor negotiations. “While we support temporary contract extensions if all parties agree,” they wrote, “automatic extension would unfairly benefit one side in negotiations and disrupt the important working relationship between employers and employees.” (See attached for letter and signatories.)

In addition to today’s event, the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns has purchased air time on local radio encouraging Rhode Islanders to call their legislator and tell them to vote no on H5593. To hear the ads visit: <http://bit.ly/RILCTVoteNoRI> .

“Many communities do not have evergreen provisions in their contracts,” Warwick Mayor Scott Avedisian, who hosted the press event. “This legislation would saddle all of us with this regressive initiative. We have choices to make every time we negotiate contracts. Some have fought to have good language that allows real negotiations. This legislation would hamper our efforts.”

Daniels was joined by a number of other mayors and municipal executives in voicing opposition to the “evergreen contract” bill.

Local officials have worked hard to keep property taxes down in light of rising costs,” said Cranston Mayor Allan Fung. “These last minute bills pushed by state house insiders are financially disastrous to our taxpayers and would handcuff even further local officials' hands when it comes to managing our city and school operations.

The expiration date of collective bargaining agreements is a key component of contract negotiations. It motivates the parties to come together and resolve their issues prior to the close of the contract. If for some reason, the parties do not complete negotiations prior to the contract expiration, they should be able to extend contracts temporarily if both parties agree. In the vast majority of cases, the parties do want to agree to continue the contract terms until they can complete negotiations.

The municipal leaders also voiced strong opposition to legislation that would expand eligibility for disability pensions. H5881 would require heart disease among firefighters to be presumed a line-of-duty injury, with no ability to take length of service, tobacco use, or relevant medical evidence into account when granting a disability pension.

Daniels said, “An actuarial analysis prepared by the General Treasurer showed that this legislation would cost \$7.1 million per year for cities and towns in the state-run pension system, with other communities with locally managed plans likely to see higher costs as well. In light of recent efforts to reduce municipal pension liabilities and control property taxes it would be irresponsible to pass this bill in the final days of the legislative session.”

Municipalities and leaders opposed to H5593

Donald R. Grebien, Mayor, Pawtucket
Stephen A. Alfred, Town Manager, South Kingstown
Charles A. Lombardi, Mayor, North Providence
T. Joseph Almond, Town Administrator, Lincoln
Scott Avedisian, Mayor, Warwick
Steven Contente, Town Administrator, Bristol
Burrillville Town Council
Graham Waters, Town Manager, Coventry
Allan W. Fung Mayor, Cranston
James A. Diossa, Mayor, Central Falls

Mark A. Stankiewicz, Town Administrator, Charlestown
William S. Murray, Mayor, Cumberland
Andrew E. Nota, Town Administrator, Jamestown
Joseph M. Polisena, Mayor, Johnston
Robert J. Silvia, Council President, Middletown
Gary S. Ezovski, Town Administrator, North Smithfield
Dennis G. Finlay, Town Manager, Smithfield
Mark Carruolo, Interim Town Manager, West Warwick
Jan Reitsma, Town Manager, Warren

Founded in 1968, the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns is a municipal membership organization that serves as the unified voice of local government in Rhode Island.

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