

JOSEPH M. POLISENA
MAYOR

TEL. (401) 553-8800
FAX. (401) 331-4271



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

TOWN HALL
1385 HARTFORD AVENUE
JOHNSTON, RHODE ISLAND 02919

July 6, 2017

Hon. Governor Gina Raimondo
State House – Room 224
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Re: Veto of H-5593a

Dear Governor Raimondo,

I strongly object to the legislation recently passed, H-5593a, which would automatically extend collective bargaining agreements for municipal employees and teachers after their contract expires. This would put all Rhode Island taxpayers in financial harm's way. It would also give up municipal leaders' rights to effectively and fairly negotiate contracts for both taxpayers and the unions and its members. This would be very costly to all cities and towns. The municipal leaders would be handcuffed and would put us in an unfair position at the negotiating table.

The expiration date of collective bargaining agreements is an important 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 expirations, they should be able to extend contracts temporarily if both parties agree. As Mayor, I have been part of the town's negotiation team with my five different unions. In the overwhelming majority of cases, the parties agree to continue significant parts of the terms of the contracts in our mutually agreed upon ground rules for negotiations so that we have more time to work towards a final resolution in good faith. We have always found a compromise sitting across the table. As you can see, the process works and for this reason, this legislation is absolutely unnecessary.

Automatic contract extension would provide greater leverage for employees at the expense of municipal officials and taxpayers. Employees would have no incentive to re-negotiate a contract if they are expected to make concessions on wages, health care or work conditions. For instance, our health care costs rose 12.8%, a significant increase, for the upcoming fiscal year. With the perpetual mandates of H-559A, what motivation would any union leader have in absorbing any of this increase for their members if they know that they are locked into the prior health co-share, especially if it is a flat dollar amount? It would be patently unfair for the taxpayers to have to absorb that increase alone if no agreement is ever reached.

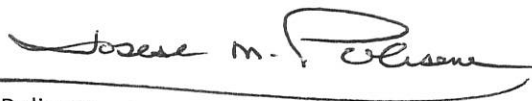
Hon. Governor Gina Raimondo
July 6, 2017
Page 2:

This proposed bill will be detrimental to not only the taxpayers in Johnston, but to the entire State! In an effort to compromise, I would have no problem if the law allowed both parties to agree to extend contracts for a short time while negotiations were ongoing.

Municipal leaders have been working hard to control property tax growth while providing important services to the public. Perpetual contracts would severely undermine our efforts, and I again ask that you veto this legislation.

Thank you for your consideration, and please feel free to contact me if you need additional information.

Very truly yours,

MAYOR 

Joseph M. Polisena
Mayor

Gov. WE NEED your help on this!!
Thanks
Joe P.

JMP/jw