



## Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns

### PRESS RELEASE

#### **For Immediate Release**

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### **League of Cities & Towns Opposes Automatic Contract Continuation, Binding Arbitration Bills**

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#### ***New Proposals Would Adversely Affect Property Taxpayers***

Providence, RI (March 1, 2018) - The Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns continues its opposition to legislation that would harm taxpayers by allowing automatic continuation of municipal contracts and expansion of binding arbitration. Four new bills (H-7198, H-7634, H-7633 and H-7379) are among those being heard by the House Labor Committee on Thursday, March 1.

“Automatic contract extension would hurt municipalities and taxpayers. We urge our Representatives at the State House not to move ahead with these bills,” said Brian Daniels, Executive Director of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns. “The expiration date of collective bargaining agreements is an opportunity for all parties to negotiate in good faith and resolve contracts before they expire. Automatically extending contracts would tie the hands of local elected and appointed officials and make it harder for employers to secure concessions – especially in an economic downturn.”

H-7198, H-7634 and H-7633 would all extend municipal collective bargaining agreements until a new agreement is achieved or an interest arbitration award provided. H-7198 is identical to legislation vetoed by Gov. Raimondo in 2017. H-7379 would expand binding arbitration law to include school teachers and municipal employees. The League opposes these measures. “We continue to support legislation to allow temporary contract continuation if both parties agree in good faith. Last year, the League supported legislation allowing voluntary contract extensions

for firefighters, which was signed into law,” said Daniels. “It’s bad policy to move the goal posts every year.”

The League testified in opposition to the initial contract extension proposals in 2017 and urged the Governor to veto the legislation. League members continue to oppose proposals for “evergreen” contract extension and expansion of binding arbitration laws. “If these bills passed, they would tie our hands in negotiating on high health care costs, wages and work conditions,” said Mayor William Murray of Cumberland.

Barrington Town Manager Jim Cunha added, “Because of careful management by mayors and town managers, property taxes statewide have grown only around 2% annually in the last four years. Contract continuation bills would make it harder for local leaders to manage personnel costs – one of the largest components of municipal budgets.”

*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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