



Distinctive Communities  
Powerful Alliance

May 8, 2019

The Honorable Gina M. Raimondo  
Governor  
State of Rhode Island  
State House  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Governor Raimondo:

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, I urge you to veto several firefighter overtime bills (H5662, H5663 / S0747, S0748) that the General Assembly is poised to pass. The bills would undermine the ability of municipal officials to manage personnel costs, leading to higher costs for the taxpayers.

The bills would force communities to pay overtime to firefighters for hours worked in excess of 42 hours per week. The Federal Fair Labor Standards Act specifically allows a much higher overtime threshold for firefighters – at 53 hours per week. While many communities currently pay overtime for over 42 hours, that is a negotiated benefit based on the needs of each community, and the state should not enact provisions more generous than Federal law. According to the League's research, no other state in New England or New York has a similar law, which would make Rhode Island an outlier in the region.

Additionally, we have the following concerns with these bills:

- **Further increases the costs of fire protection services** – In a December 2018 report, the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council found that Rhode Island continues to have the highest fire protection costs per capita in the nation. Further, the U.S. Fire Administration's National Fire Department Registry of 2018 found that Rhode Island had the sixth highest percentage of registered career and mostly career fire departments, making any personnel mandates burdensome for many communities. Our municipal budgets are funded mainly by property taxes, and this legislation would only increase personnel costs.
- **Reduces management authority in bargaining** – Two communities with three-platoon structures have been in contract negotiations. This legislation has directly interfered with those efforts, favoring local bargaining units at the expense of local officials and taxpayers. The remaining district, Central Coventry Fire District, estimated that it would cost more than \$700,000 to comply if the law passes.

Every time the General Assembly restricts the ability of municipal officials to control personnel costs, it ultimately increases our already-high property tax burden. The General Assembly should not be substituting its judgment for that of local elected officials. We urge you to veto these bills.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "B. Daniels".

Brian M. Daniels  
Executive Director