



RHODE ISLAND LEAGUE
OF CITIES AND TOWNS

*Distinctive Communities
Powerful Alliance*

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League of Cities & Towns Opposes Automatic Contract Continuation

Legislation would eliminate the need for negotiations and allow contracts to go on indefinitely, at the expense of taxpayers

PROVIDENCE - The Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns continues its strong opposition to legislation that would allow the automatic continuation of municipal contracts for employees, negating the need for negotiations. The bill (H5437) will drive rising personnel, healthcare and retirement costs and place that burden on local taxpayers.

“Automatic contract extension would hurt municipalities and taxpayers. We urge our Representatives at the State House to oppose this bill,” **said Brian Daniels, Executive Director of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns** . “The expiration date of collective bargaining agreements encourages all parties to come together and resolve their issues. Automatically extending contracts would make it harder for employers to secure concessions - especially in an economic downturn.”

H5437 would extend municipal collective bargaining agreements indefinitely. The League testified in opposition to the initial contract extension proposals earlier this year, as well as in 2018 and 2017, when the Governor vetoed similar legislation. League members continue to oppose proposals for “evergreen” contract extension.

“Contract continuation disrupts the balance that is so important for finding solutions when at an impasse,” **said Burrillville Town Manager Michael Wood**. “This legislation would weaken our negotiating position, especially when communities need to balance budgets in difficult economic circumstances.”

“This bill will handcuff municipal leaders and put us in an unfair position at the negotiating table,” **said Johnston Mayor Joseph Polisena** . “The General Assembly cannot expect the terms of a contract to go on indefinitely. Situations change - the needs of our community, healthcare costs, recessions - we have to be able to negotiate based upon the current realities. If we can’t control personnel costs, the only alternatives are to service cuts or property tax increases.”

Barrington Town Manager Jim Cunha added , “The General Assembly should not impose a one-size-fits-all solution on cities and towns. There have been a handful of problematic contract issues in some communities in recent years, but that does not justify changing the rules for the

majority of cities and towns that have good relationships with their employees. The General Assembly needs to serve the taxpayers and not special interests.”

“We continue to support legislation to allow temporary contract continuation if both parties agree in good faith. In past years, the League supported legislation allowing voluntary contract extensions for firefighters, which was signed into law,” **said Daniels** . “We prefer that approach and strongly oppose evergreen contracts bills like H5437.”

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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