



TOWN OF PORTSMOUTH

2200 East Main Road • Portsmouth, Rhode Island 02871 • www.portsmouthri.com

July 13, 2017

The Honorable Gina M. Raimondo
Governor, State of Rhode Island
State House, 82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Governor Raimondo:

The General Assembly has passed legislation that would automatically extend collective bargaining agreements for municipal employees and teachers after expiration (H5593 Sub A). Because it would limit the ability of officials to negotiate in the best interest of taxpayers, I respectfully request you veto the perpetual contracts bill.

I concur with our fellow municipal leaders who have voiced their opposition to this legislation. The expiration date of a labor contract motivates parties to come together to resolve their issues prior to the close of the contract. There are times when a resolution cannot be reached prior to the end of a contract and in that case parties should be able to extend contracts temporarily if both sides agree. This has always been the case. Negotiation is a necessary process that allows both parties to address differences and account for changes in the political, economic, and labor environment. A negotiated expiration date protects both parties while simultaneously encouraging those parties to review and discuss ways to reconcile issues between them.

This legislation is unnecessary. It potentially harms the negotiating position of municipalities charged with a fiduciary responsibility to contain costs. Under this legislation, employees would have no incentive at all to negotiate concessions on wages, pensions, other post-employment benefits, or work conditions. Perpetual contracts tie our hands and will limit our ability to promote efficient and cost-effective government and will place a higher burden on the taxpayers.

Municipal leaders are working hard to control property tax growth while providing important services to the public. Perpetual contracts would undermine those efforts, and I again ask you to veto this legislation. Thank you for your consideration, and please do not hesitate to contact me if you need additional information or assistance.

Sincerely,

Keith E. Hamilton
Portsmouth Town Council President

cc: Brian Daniels, RI League of Cities and Towns



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Sincerely,

Richard A. Rainer
Portsmouth Town Administrator

Ana C. Riley
Superintendent, Portsmouth Public Schools

cc: Brian Daniels, RI League of Cities and Towns