

Your action is needed to defeat bills that would extend labor contracts beyond their expiration date

Senate Bill S-713 and House Bill H-5762 are in the House Labor Committee. If passed, these bills will extend labor contracts beyond their expiration date. The Senate has already passed S-713 with a vote of 32-2, with only Senators Pinga and Maher voting against. See the ProJo editorial below for a good overview of the problems created by these bills.

Call the following leaders and ask for “no passage” of these bills:

House Speaker Murphy 222-2466

House Majority Leader Fox 222-2447

Labor Committee Chairman Corvese 353-8695

Your Representative. Contact info at <http://www.sec.state.ri.us/vic/>

House Committee on Labor

Legislator	Appointment	E-mail & telephone
Rep. Elaine A. Coderre	Member	rep-ecoderre@rilin.state.ri.us 222-7649
Rep. Arthur J. Corvese	Chairperson	rep-corvese@rilin.state.ri.us 353-8695
Rep. John G. Edwards	Member	rep-edwards@rilin.state.ri.us 624-8879
Rep. Deborah A. Fellela	Member	rep-fellela@rilin.state.ri.us 231-2014
Rep. Douglas W. Gablinske	Member	rep-gablinske@rilin.state.ri.us 253-5523
Rep. Scott J. Guthrie	Member	rep-guthrie@rilin.state.ri.us 823-3451
Rep. Peter F. Kilmartin	Member	rep-kilmartin@rilin.state.ri.us 727-2211
Rep. John J. Loughlin Jr.	Member	rep-loughlin@rilin.state.ri.us 625-9889
Rep. John J. McCauley Jr.	Member	rep-mccauley@rilin.state.ri.us 421-3331
Rep. Mary Ann Shallcross Smith	Member	rep-shallcrosssmith@rilin.state.ri.us 727-8982
Rep. Kenneth A. Vaudreuil	Secretary	rep-vaudreuil@rilin.state.ri.us 728-1523
Rep. Anastasia Williams	Vice Chairperson	rep-williams@rilin.state.ri.us 272-8135
Rep. Thomas Winfield	Member	rep-winfield@rilin.state.ri.us 949-3356

Clerk: William Souza

Phone: 222-2587

Editorial: Stop special-interest law

01:00 AM EDT on Sunday, June 21, 2009, *Providence Journal*

In a reckless act, legislators are rushing through the Rhode Island General Assembly a plan that would effectively lock unsustainable teacher-union contracts in place indefinitely. It is hard to imagine what they are thinking in taking a step that could undercut the ability of every community in Rhode Island to negotiate contracts to better serve the common good.

That would leave some communities with little choice except to raise taxes by double digits, sowing enormous financial hardship for citizens and struggling businesses, or to declare bankruptcy.

Are taxpayers truly so poorly represented at the State House?

It would seem so. This legislation, sponsored by Peter Palumbo (D.-Cranston) and pushed hard by Sen. Charles Levesque (D.-Bristol and Portsmouth), flew through the Senate by a margin of 32-2 and seemed ready to be rushed through the House.

The legislation was clearly designed to stop cold the East Providence School Committee. Facing enormous deficits, and unable to negotiate a contract that sufficiently reduced expenses, that committee acted unilaterally to control costs, arguing that since the old contract had expired, the city had the ability to make adjustments in an economic emergency. The union argued that the committee's action was tantamount to failing to bargain in good faith.

That matter is now before the courts. The General Assembly should let that process play out, rather than coming down on one side.

By now, it should be clear to anyone who reads the newspaper that Rhode Island communities, buffeted by declining or stagnant tax revenues, are finding it increasingly difficult to sustain union contracts that provide remarkably generous benefits to public employees.

Clearly, contracts must be brought in line with the ability of communities to pay for them. But if contracts can be extended indefinitely, the old benefits will never be cut, nor will education reforms be made to better serve the interests of students. The unions will have a powerful incentive to hold out for a very, very long time.