



We Make Rhode Island Happen

AFSCME Rhode Island Council 94

American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO

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Memo To: House Finance Committee Members

From: James A Cenerini, Legislative Affairs/Political Action Coordinator, RI Council 94, AFSCME

RE: H-7249/ S-2310 – Reinstate State Employees' Longevity PRO

Rhode Island Council 94, AFSCME, AFL-CIO strongly supports H-7249/S-2310, which would allow state employees' unions to negotiate the reinstatement of Longevity benefits.

Background:

Longevity Benefits were derived from the State law, Personnel Rules, and union contracts.

In 2011, the General Assembly passed Budget Article 8, which froze existing state employees' longevity benefits as of June 30, 2011. Longevity Benefits were eliminated for State Employees hired after June 30, 2011. Not only were Longevity Benefits frozen, but they were removed from the scope of Collective Bargaining entirely.

The existing Longevity Benefits language in State Employees Master Contract:

6.5 Each employee shall be granted a longevity increase according to the following formula:

Percentage Increase	
Years of Service	On Base Rate
5	5%
11	10%
15	15%
20	17.5%
25	20%

6.6 Notwithstanding any provision of the collective bargaining agreement to the contrary, an employee's eligibility for longevity stipends, including the amount thereof, shall be governed by the applicable provisions of Article 8 of the FY 2012 Budget (P.L. 2011, ch.151, art 8), as amended.

What does H-7249/S-2310 do?

The legislation does not repeal Budget Article 8. Instead, H-7249/ S-2310 restores the original statutory language that would allow state employees to receive Longevity Benefits after July 1, 2024.

Longevity Benefits would only resume for state employees union members, in accordance with the Personnel Rules, if contract language was mutually agreed upon and ratified in a new contract.

Council 94 also maintains that this legislation would not provide retroactive longevity payments.

The legislation would simply restore state employee unions ability to negotiate the Longevity benefits.

Why is H-7249/S-2310 necessary?

Due to the COVID pandemic and tight labor market the state is suffering from high vacancy rates and difficulty in hiring critically important positions.

The cumulative trend of reducing retiree medical benefits (2008), multiple rounds of pension reductions (2005-2011), increasing costs of medical benefits, and the elimination of longevity, has made state government jobs less attractive.

The elimination of longevity means that some state employees work side by side with other workers who are able to make 20% more for doing the same work.

To safely staff our court rooms, prisons, Veterans 'Home, Human Services, Environmental, and Education Agencies, the cycle of continuous benefit reductions must be reversed.

RI Council 94, AFSCME, AFL-CIO urges you to strengthen state services by passing H-7249/S-2310.

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