



Oct 20, 2013

Somerville Labor Coalition Unions Strongly Oppose Retirement Healthcare Reform Bill 59

Dear State Senators and Representatives

Massachusetts House Bill 59 is yet another attempt to diminish benefits of hard working middle class workers. Health care benefits provided by Cities and the State to its employees were negotiated in good faith and guaranteed as part of an agreement between employer and employee.

In some cases, municipal wages remained lower than the private sector because municipal employees received health insurance as part of their pension. Municipal employees now pay 11% of their salary to fund their portion of their pension. Almost all have agreed to pay a larger share of their Health care premium or have been forced to switch to plans that are less costly to the employer such as the State GIC.

Employees are expected to pay more for Health care premiums. They are also faced with increases in deductibles and out of pocket expenses associated with medical care that quite often amount to thousands of dollars. Several communities have switched to the State run GIC plan in an effort to cut costs.

The majority of employees, who need to retire prior to completing 30 of service, do so because of health reasons. A premature departure for employment means a much smaller pension and health care cost may consume a huge portion of it.

Unable to work and in need of health care insurance, retired employees will now have to pay more when they earn less when they need it the most. The seemingly endless effort by the State to subjugate its workers and their benefits in the guise of reform has to stop. Many rounds of pension reform and years of stagnant wages, along with changes to health care have saved Massachusetts Cities and the State millions of dollars at the expense of its workers. The state of Massachusetts is number 1 in defunding pensions in the country because they use our money for other things and leave us unprotected and open to this continued abuse of our pensions. Municipal state pensions should be protected and not used for other projects.

Looting the Pension Funds

All across America, Wall Street is grabbing money meant for public workers

By MATT TAIBBI SEPTEMBER 26, 2013

This Quote below is from the October 10th, 2013 issue of Rolling Stone.

“14 states have regularly failed to make their Annual Required Contributions to the pension fund in 2011. Among the worst of these offenders are Massachusetts (made just 27 percent of its payments).”

Municipal workers are not the proverbial pig at the trough. They are hardworking middle class men and women providing necessary services to the citizen of this commonwealth. They deserve to be paid a fair wage with affordable health care and a reasonable pension for their service. Health care as well as any change to working conditions should be subject to bargaining under MGL 150e. Let Cities and Towns negotiate changes fairly. Let's stop this culture of attacks on the working class in the sake of reform and find real solutions to what is really driving up the cost of Health care.

We insist that you do not support this bill as it is very damaging to all municipal workers across the State and demand that the money we have deducted from our weekly pay checks are only used to fund our pensions and not be used to fund pet projects in the state.

Respectfully Yours,

The 600 members that represent the Somerville Labor Coalition



Ed Halloran, Co-Chair - Somerville Municipal Employees Association
Steven Ross, Secretary - Somerville Municipal Employees Association
Jim Roderick, SLC Co-Founding Member - Somerville Municipal Employees Union



Thomas Ross, Co-Chair - Somerville Firefighters Association



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