

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2023

A N A C T

RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES'  
ARBITRATION

Introduced By: Senators Lawson, Murray, Ciccone, F. Lombardi, Britto, Lauria, Mack,  
McKenney, and LaMountain

Date Introduced: February 16, 2023

Referred To: Senate Labor

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Sections 28-9.4-1, 28-9.4-3, 28-9.4-4, 28-9.4-12 and 28-9.4-13 of the General  
2 Laws in Chapter 28-9.4 entitled "Municipal Employees' Arbitration" are hereby amended to read  
3 as follows:

4 **28-9.4-1. Declaration of policy — Purpose.**

5 (a) It is declared to be the public policy of this state to accord to municipal employees the  
6 right to organize, to be represented, to negotiate, and to bargain on a collective basis with municipal  
7 employers, over covering hours, ~~salary, working conditions~~ wages, rates of pay and all other terms  
8 of employment; provided, that nothing contained in this chapter shall be construed to accord to  
9 municipal employees the right to strike.

10 (b) To provide for the exercise of these rights, a method of arbitration of disputes is hereby  
11 established. The establishment of this method of arbitration shall not, however, in any way  
12 whatsoever, be deemed to be a recognition by the state, of compulsory arbitration as a superior  
13 method of settling labor disputes between employees, who possess the right to strike and their  
14 municipal employers, but rather shall be deemed to be a recognition solely of the necessity to  
15 provide some alternative mode of settling disputes, where employees must, as a matter of public  
16 policy, be denied the usual right to strike.

17 **28-9.4-3. Right to organize and bargain collectively.**

18 (a) The municipal employees of any municipal employer in any city, town, or regional

1 school district shall have the right to negotiate and to bargain collectively with their respective  
2 municipal employers and to be represented by an employee organization in the negotiation or  
3 collective bargaining concerning hours, ~~salary, working conditions,~~ wages, rates of pay and all  
4 other terms and conditions of employment.

5 (b) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a), for those municipal employees who  
6 are employed by school districts, collective bargaining agreements shall not provide for benefits  
7 for health care (“benefit plans”) for school district employees unless such benefit plans are  
8 authorized in accordance with chapter 73 of title 27. School district employees whose collective  
9 bargaining agreements expire on or after September 30, 2011, may, upon expiration of such  
10 collective bargaining agreements, receive benefit plans including, but not limited to, those  
11 recommended in accordance with chapter 73 of title 27.

12 **28-9.4-4. Recognition of bargaining agent.**

13 The employee organization selected by the municipal employees in an appropriate  
14 bargaining unit, as determined by the state labor relations board, shall be recognized by the  
15 municipal employer or the city, town, or district as the sole and exclusive negotiating or bargaining  
16 agent for all of the municipal employees in the appropriate bargaining unit in the city, town, or  
17 school district unless and until recognition of the employee organization is withdrawn or changed  
18 by vote of the municipal employees in the appropriate bargaining unit after a duly conducted  
19 election held pursuant to the provisions of this chapter. An employee organization or the municipal  
20 employer may designate any person or persons to negotiate or bargain in its behalf; provided,  
21 however, that the person or persons so designated, shall be given the authority to enter into and  
22 execute an effective and binding collective bargaining agreement.

23 **28-9.4-12. Hearings.**

24 (a) The arbitrators shall call a hearing to be held within ten (10) days after their appointment  
25 and shall give at least seven (7) days’ notice, in writing, to the negotiating or bargaining agent and  
26 the municipal employer of the time and place of the hearing.

27 (b) The hearing shall be informal, and the rules of evidence prevailing in judicial  
28 proceedings shall not be binding. Any and all documentary evidence and other data deemed  
29 relevant by the arbitrators may be received in evidence.

30 (c) The arbitrators shall have the power to administer oaths and to require by subpoena the  
31 attendance and testimony of witnesses, and the production of books, records, and other evidence  
32 relative or pertinent to the issues presented to them for determination.

33 (d) Both the negotiating or bargaining agent and the municipal employer shall have the  
34 right to be represented at any hearing before the arbitrators by counsel of their own choosing.

1 (e) The hearing conducted by the arbitrators shall be concluded within twenty (20) days of  
2 the time of commencement, and within ten (10) days after the conclusion of the hearings, the  
3 arbitrators shall make written findings and a written opinion upon the issues presented, a copy of  
4 which shall be mailed or otherwise delivered to the negotiating or bargaining agent or its attorney  
5 or other designated representative and the municipal employer. A majority decision of the  
6 arbitrators shall be final and binding, upon both the bargaining agent and the municipal employer.

7 **28-9.4-13. Appeal from decision.**

8 (a) While the parties are engaged in negotiations and/or utilizing the dispute resolution  
9 process as required in § 28-9.4-10, all terms and conditions in the collective bargaining agreement  
10 shall remain in effect. The decision of the arbitrators shall be made public and shall be binding  
11 upon the municipal employees in the appropriate bargaining unit and their representative and the  
12 municipal employer on all matters. ~~not involving the expenditure of money. Should either party~~  
13 ~~reject the nonbinding matters in the decision of the arbitrators, the binding matters shall be~~  
14 ~~implemented. Following the conclusion of the dispute resolution process as required in § 28-9.4-~~  
15 ~~10, should the parties still be unable to reach agreement, all contractual provisions related to wages~~  
16 ~~and benefits contained in the collective bargaining agreement, except for any contractual provisions~~  
17 ~~that limit layoffs, shall continue as agreed to in the expired collective bargaining agreement until~~  
18 ~~such time as a successor agreement has been reached between the parties.~~

19 (b) ~~The decision of the arbitrators shall be final and cannot be appealed except on the~~  
20 ~~ground that the decision was procured by fraud or that it violates the law, in which case appeals~~  
21 ~~shall be to the superior court. The sole avenue of review of a decision of an arbitration panel, issued~~  
22 ~~pursuant to this chapter, shall be by a petition for writ of certiorari to the supreme court. If a decision~~  
23 ~~of the arbitration panel is sought to be reviewed by writ of certiorari to the supreme court, the matter~~  
24 ~~shall be given priority by the supreme court.~~

25 ~~(c) The municipal employer shall within three (3) days after it receives the decision send a~~  
26 ~~true copy of the decision by certified or registered mail postage prepaid to the department or agency~~  
27 ~~of the municipal employer responsible for the preparation of the budget and to the agency of the~~  
28 ~~municipal employer that appropriates money for the operation of the particular municipal function~~  
29 ~~or service in the city, town, or regional school district involved, if the decision involves the~~  
30 ~~expenditure of money.~~

31 SECTION 2. Chapter 28-9.4 of the General Laws entitled "Municipal Employees'  
32 Arbitration" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

33 **28-9.4-12.1. Factors to be considered by arbitration board.**

34 The arbitrators shall conduct the hearings and render their decision upon the basis of a

1 prompt, peaceful and just settlement of wages, rates of pay, hours or terms and conditions of  
2 employment disputes, between the municipal employees and their municipal employer, by which  
3 they are employed. The factors, among others, to be given weight by the arbitrators, in arriving at  
4 a decision shall include:

5 (1) Comparison of wage rates, hourly requirements, or conditions of employment of a  
6 municipal employer in question, with prevailing wage rates, hourly requirements, or conditions of  
7 employment for the same or similar work of employees, exhibiting like or similar skills, under the  
8 same or similar working conditions in the local operating area involved;

9 (2) Comparison of wage rates, hourly requirements, or conditions of employment of the  
10 municipal employer in question, with wage rates, hourly requirements, or conditions of  
11 employment maintained for the same or similar work of employees exhibiting like or similar skills,  
12 under the same or similar working conditions in the local operating area involved;

13 (3) Comparison of wage rates, hourly requirements, or conditions of employment of the  
14 municipal employer in question, with wage rates, hourly requirements, or conditions of  
15 employment of municipal employers in cities or towns of comparable size;

16 (4) Interest and welfare of the public;

17 (5) Comparison of peculiarities of employment, with other trades or professions,  
18 specifically:

19 (i) Hazards of employment;

20 (ii) Physical qualifications;

21 (iii) Educational qualifications;

22 (iv) Mental qualifications; and

23 (v) Job training and skills.

24 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES'  
ARBITRATION

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1           This act would establish new factors for the interest contract arbitration board for municipal  
2 employee unions, to consider in rendering a binding decision on the contract, would grant the board  
3 power to render an award over all negotiated matters, including the expenditure of money and  
4 would provide for a review of the arbitration panel's decision, by writ of certiorari to the supreme  
5 court.

6           This act would take effect upon passage.

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