



Apr. 23, 2015

Honorable Michael Dembrow, Chair  
Senate Committee on Workforce  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, Or 97301

RE: HB 2544 related to binding arbitration

Dear Chair Dembrow and Members of the Workforce Committee:

I am writing to you again to express the City of Beaverton's strong opposition to House Bill 2544, which would require unresolved mid-term collective bargaining issues to proceed to binding arbitration for strike-permitted unions. This will dramatically change the current system and statutory provisions for collective bargaining and will have a profoundly negative impact on the bargaining process.

HB 2544 would expand the bargaining process beyond 90 days if parties cannot reach an agreement. When no agreement is reached, the matter is submitted to the Employee Relations Board for binding arbitration—this could result in an additional 80 to 90 days to the entire process. Unions can refuse to mediate until they absolutely have to, effectively causing cities to pay for a mediator twice. The proposed change threatens to create a prolonged process at the cities expense. The expense to hire lawyers to conduct the arbitration, staff time and energy creates an undue burden and expense on local governments.

This may result in forcing public employers into a constant state of bargaining.

We have used expedited bargaining several times with both SEIU and police whenever either side wanted to make changes mid-contract and successfully resolved the issues each time. The city's current system and statutory provisions for mid-term bargaining is adequate—if the union or the city demands to bargain, we meet; and if it isn't settled in 90 days, the change can be implemented if we agree. If we do not agree, SEIU can strike and Beaverton Police Association can proceed to binding interest arbitration. In other words, the current system is not broken and this bill does not solve any pressing issue.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment, and I urge you to maintain the current law and oppose HB 2544.

Sincerely,



Nancy Bates  
Human Resources Director