



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

State House

Providence, Rhode Island 02903-1196

401-222-2080

Donald L. Carcieri

Governor

July 4, 2007

TO THE HONORABLE, THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE:

In accordance with the provisions of Section 14, Article IX of the Constitution of the State of Rhode Island and Section 43-1-4 of the Rhode Island General Laws, I transmit, with my disapproval, 2007-S 0619, "An Act Relating to Courts and Civil Procedure - Courts - Pensions and Benefits -- Domestic Partners."

This act would provide to domestic partners of certain state and municipal employees, including judges, pension, death and other retirement benefits. For purposes of this chapter, the definition of "domestic partner" includes persons who have resided together for one year and who are "financially interdependent" as evidenced by satisfying two of the following criteria: (a) domestic partnership agreement or relationship contract; (b) joint mortgage or joint ownership of primary residence; (c) the domestic partner had been designated as a beneficiary for the decedent's will, retirement contract or life insurance; or (d) two of the following four financial relationships: joint ownership of motor vehicle; joint checking account; joint credit account; or joint lease.

While the State currently offers a variety of benefits to domestic partners under current law, I believe this bill represents an ill-thought-out expansion of employee benefits that will cost the State significant dollars over a long period of time.

As indicated by the definition of domestic partners, described above, a State employee and his or her domestic partner could satisfy the test with as little documented commitment as a joint checking and credit account and the designation of the partner as beneficiary on a life insurance policy. If this relationship existed between a fifty year old judge making \$120,000, who is pension eligible and has served as a judge for as little as seven years, and his or her forty year old domestic partner, as defined, who also resided with the judge for as little as one year, then the domestic partner would be eligible upon the judge's death to receive 1/3 of the judge's salary (\$40,000) for the remainder of his or her life. That benefit could easily last another forty years for a total cost to the State of \$1.6 million.

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I believe the public is now demanding that their State leaders be ever more vigilant in protecting their tax dollars from unwarranted and unnecessary expansions of state employee benefits.

For these reasons, I disapprove of this legislation and respectfully urge your support of this veto.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Carcieri", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Donald L. Carcieri
Governor