

Bob Jean  
Rockland  
LD 70

Senator Tipping, Representative Rader, and Members of the Labor and Housing Committee,

My name is Bob Jean from Rockland. I am a retired teacher with 38 years of service. I speak today in favor of LD70. I am currently President of the Knox County Retired Educators Association and President-Elect for Maine Education Association-Retired. I hear about this particular issue from many members locally and state-wide, The COLA cap established in 2011 continues to erode retirees' pensions, especially when the rate of inflation is sky high. Additionally, the COLA is only applied to the first \$24,900 of a retiree's pension. We continue to fall behind as the value of our pensions decrease and our buying power shrinks.

Retired educators are often thanked for their past service. That is admirable but does not paint the whole picture. Retirees still provide valuable service to their communities and the State. We are retired-not expired.

There is a high rate of volunteerism among retired educators. During the pandemic retired teachers stepped up big time. Some became mentors for active teachers who were struggling with the almost impossible tasks they had to deal with. Many of us volunteered in schools and continue to do so because we see the overwhelming needs. Other retired educators answered the call and began substituting to help address teacher and ESP shortages. Finally, some headed back into the workforce as they saw the need to correct these devastating shortages. Retired-not expired.

This sounds like a group of people who are deserving of a fair COLA on the entire amount of their pensions. Their past, and continued, service to our State should/could be more fully recognized. A good start would be consideration of LD70. We trust that sincere consideration and efforts will be made to begin fixing this frustrating situation. Thank you for time and service to the State of Maine!