

Friday, April 29, 2011

Editorial: Bipartisan effort

Democrats, too, are reining in the costs of public-employee benefits

On Tuesday night, the Massachusetts House of Representatives followed the lead of legislatures in Ohio and Wisconsin in voting to limit the collective-bargaining rights of public-employee unions.

The measure would reduce the ability of police officers, teachers and city employees to bargain for health-care benefits. The aim, as in Ohio, is to save millions of dollars for hard-pressed local governments.

States don't come bluer than the home state of the late Sen. Edward M. Kennedy. Democrats hold supermajorities in both chambers of the state legislature. This sticks a fork in the idea that the cost of public employees' benefits is of concern only to Republicans.

States are in deep financial trouble. Unlike the federal government, the majority of states are required to balance their budgets. The burgeoning cost of providing health benefits to public workers and the enormous unfunded public-pension obligations are genuine and significant fiscal problems.

In order to rein in those costs, lawmakers in states where unions have gained the upper hand in negotiations needed to regain management rights.

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