My name is Tim Murphy . I am a retired state of Rhode Island employee. I was also affected when the General Assembly chose not to follow the law in 2011. I too represent the sentiments of the Clifford group and the pre-RIRSA Retiree Pension Justice group.

In 2022 the Washington Post named Rhode Island the 6th most corrupt state in the United States. In 2023, the highly-respected World Population Review named Rhode Island the FOURTH most corrupt state in the United States. We assume the Review must have been watching the broadcast of the House’s final budget hearings, where Joseph Shekarchi, the man in Rhode Island most responsible for securing the passage of laws, apparently had one grinning member ready to make a motion to table voting on any pension bills that would have finally comported with federal and state law.

You know the fix is in when the General Assembly keeps selling you down the river, despite being informed to a member, that laws were broken, the whole thing was a set up, and they need to honor the contracts of those people who had already retired when the 2011 law was passed.

You know the fix is in when James Diossa, who as state Treasurer is supposed to be looking out for you, suggests that the answer to your problem is one $500 stipend and “staying the course” until 2032.

You know the fix is in when you testify in front of the House Finance Committee and the chair doesn’t even bother to attend the meeting and various members wander in and out during your testimony, something that is both distracting and frankly, rude.

You know the fix is in when the supposed savior of the retirees, Roger Boudreau, testifies AGAINST the bill that would reinstate original COLAs for affected retirees, giving as an excuse that the bill didn’t cover teachers. Retirees were assured by one of the bill’s sponsors, both verbally and in writing, that the bill *did* cover teachers. So did Roger Boudreau even bother to ask the question? And if he didn’t know the answer after attending endless fundraisers for members of the General Assembly, he now does. The only question that remains is whether he will now publicly come out in support of the full restoration of the original COLA or continue to lobby for a worthless, watered-down version that isn’t worth the paper it is written on.

You know the fix is in when, the speaker of the house, Joseph Shekarchi, Gina Raimondo’s former campaign manager, decides to continue to protect her “legacy by malfeasance” and telling the General Assembly how high to jump, decides to continue to ignore the law, refusing to support and promote the bill that would reinstate the original COLAs for the affected retirees. *It is a great irony that the* *man in Rhode Island most responsible for securing the passage of laws somewhere along the way has decided he and the rest of the General Assembly no longer need to follow them.*

You know the fix is in when James Diossa, on orders from the General Assembly, sets up a fiscal advisory group to examine the intended “unintended consequences” of the 2011 law and does not appoint one retiree-advocate, despite having application from an active retiree-advocate with fiscal and budgetary experience from having worked in the Governor’s budget office, that retiree checking in regularly with Diossa’s office to see if appointments had been made, and that retiree having the full support of his senator, who wrote a letter in support of his candidacy.

As an aside, our understanding was that this advisory group was exactly that - advisory – and that it would be making its recommendations once all testimony was in.  In keeping with that, no members are in a position to be making any kind of statements until all of the testimony is heard.  To do otherwise indicates clear prejudgment and has no place on an advisory group tasked with examining matters as critical as our past, present and financial futures. If any members of the group are incapable of withholding judgment until they have dealt with all of the facts surrounding the 2011 abomination, they should do the honorable thing and resign from the group.  We pre-RIRSA retirees are determined to continue to fight for what is rightfully, but moreover, legally ours – the return of our 3% annual compounded COLAs.

We retirees know that the fix has been in since the 2011 law and 2015 Settlement Agreement were railroaded through by the General Assembly. We know that the fix is still in, and the only question that remains is whether a real fix is in our future or the same phony window dressing will continue to be paraded about.

In conclusion, whether or not you as the advisory group believe that the fix was in, the end result must be the same. We ask that you advise the Governor, the General Assembly and the courts to follow the RI Supreme Court decision in *Arena vs. City of Providence*. Since that decision forbids the State of Rhode Island from changing retirement benefits retrospectively, the State owes the 3% compounded COLA, retroactive to 2011, to those teachers and state employees who were already retired when the 2011 RIRSA legislation was rushed through and the law was first broken.

Wishing you all a wonderful holiday season.