

# The Republican.

## Community colleges in pay battle

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BOSTON – Community college presidents and teachers will press the Romney administration to approve disputed retroactive pay for faculty and other staff.

The state Legislature last week overrode Gov. W. Mitt Romney's veto of \$29.9 million in retroactive pay raises for employees of state universities and colleges, but refused to take up the governor's veto of back pay for faculty and professional staff of the state's 15 community colleges.

Legislators didn't attempt to override the veto because the community college faculty and staff did not have a contract signed by the governor. The contract was approved by the state Board of Higher Education in 2002, but never signed by former acting Gov. Jane M. Swift.

Robert L. Pura, president of Greenfield Community College, said yesterday he and other community college presidents will write a letter to Judith I. Gill, chancellor of the state Board of Higher Education, asking her to support the back pay for faculty and certain staff.

Pura said he was surprised that "a legal technicality" derailed the pay for the employees.

"That is pay that is due to them," Pura said. "To not get that at all is of deep concern."

Romney Feb. 24 vetoed \$3.782 million including \$121,859 for 71 employees at Greenfield Community College, \$479,857 for 199 employees at Springfield Technical Community College and \$311,425 for 142 employees at Holyoke Community College. All the employees are members of the Massachusetts Community College Council.

Though faculty and professional staff at the community colleges were excluded from the overrides, employees at community colleges covered by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees did have a signed contract with the state and will receive retroactive pay raises.

Laura L. Nicoll, a spokeswoman for Romney, said yesterday the contract for the community college council exceeded the limits set by the state's Human Resources Division.

Swift rejected that contract and then the Board of Higher Education never sent a revised contract after Romney took office in January 2003, Nicoll said.

The contract needs to be negotiated again, she said.

Mark A. Lange, professor of psychology at Holyoke Community College and president of the college's branch of the community college council, said yesterday the retroactive pay would be about 1 percent of a year's salary.

Lange said some faculty and staff are extraordinarily frustrated about being left out of last week's legislative overrides.

"People ... work so hard at providing a quality education for students and then are treated like second-class employees by the state," Lange said. "That's no way to treat people who work hard and do a good job."

Lange said union members will continue to lobby legislators and the governor.

The House and the Senate last week unanimously overrode Romney's veto of back pay for 9,026 employees at the five campuses of the University of Massachusetts who did have signed contracts. Certain employees at state colleges also benefited from the overrides.