

## Mike McDonald: The truth vs. 'arrogant, bitter' Achorn

Jun 10, 2011 | [Permalink](#)

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I am writing in response to "No compassion for you if you're in the private sector," Edward Achorn's March 15 column.

The article is no more than a tangled web of deception and false information. I am one of the public employees Mr. Achorn makes his living ridiculing and downgrading. While I am certainly very grateful to currently have employment I feel I must set the record straight.

Over the last several years my fellow co-workers and I have endured attack after attack from the likes of Mr. Achorn in the media, from some in the Rhode Island General Assembly and from former Gov. Donald Carcieri.

Public employees have endured three rounds of deep reductions in retirement benefits, as well as in retiree health care. These cuts have been handed down and yet we are still expected to contribute the same amount, for a lesser benefit.

The retirement changes are only the beginning. State employee contributions toward health insurance was raised 15 percent over the last several years while the plan design was reduced.

Finally, as part of an effort to save our young employees from mass layoffs we submitted to 12 furlough days. In other words, between 2010 and the beginning of 2011 public employees worked unpaid for 12 days. I don't write this asking for sympathy. It is certainly understood there are many others who are much worse off than me and co-workers.

I write this to illustrate how easy it is for any bitter, arrogant member of the media to twist facts. As public employees we are not the cause of this economic crisis, but we have taken our share of lumps just the same as anyone else. No matter how many times we are attacked with false information and spin by bullies like Edward Achorn it doesn't make the information accurate.

It is very easy in these difficult times to point fingers and assign blame. At the very least I would hope Mr. Achorn with his extraordinary writing skills could do two things: Choose a topic other than the degradation of public employees once and a while and as University of Connecticut basketball coach Jim Calhoun so eloquently stated "get some facts and come back and see me."

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