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SMITH HILL REPORT



PUBLISHED BY THE RHODE ISLAND FEDERATION OF TEACHERS & HEALTH PROFESSIONALS/AFT, AFL-CIO

Pension Information Now Available

As recently reported, a press conference was held last Friday related to the litigation surrounding the recent pension cuts to vested teachers, state workers and certain municipal workers and retirees. Information about the settlement can be viewed at RIPensionInfo.org.

Pension Funding revisited

Last year, the RIFTHP, AFSCME Council 94, and the AARP worked to oppose an effort to eliminate state law requiring surplus state revenue to be placed into the pension fund to make the fund healthier. That proposal failed on a dramatic 39-36 vote on the House floor. Governor Chafee repeated his request to eliminate the law this year. The RIFTHP repeated its opposition to the measure as well.

[Article 17](#), Section 1 is the proposal to eliminate future supplemental pension funding out of surplus state revenue. [Article 17](#) Section 7 is a related proposal to delete state law that requires the State to make a pension contribution based on 5.5% of state privatization contracts.

On Tuesday, February 11, RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi testified against both measures in the Senate Finance Committee. Parisi reminded the Committee that teacher and state retiree COLAs are dependent on a healthy pension fund, and that every penny of available funding needs to be put into the pension fund instead of being diverted for other uses. Joining Parisi at the hearing in opposition to the article was Jim Cenerini of AFSCME Council 94.

RIFTHP Urges Appointment of More Teachers and Faculty to Board of Education

Governor Chafee has proposed to reorganize the Board of Education by creating two councils comprised of seven members of the Board of Education. One council would be for elementary and secondary education, and the other council would be for post-secondary education. The current combined Board of Education consists of 11 members. That number would grow to 15.

The Chafee proposal was incorporated as [Article 20](#) of the State Budget. The proposal was also introduced as legislation by Senator Hannah Gallo. RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi testified on Article 20 before a joint hearing of the House Finance and the House Health, Education and Welfare

February 19, 2014

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Committees on February 11. Similar testimony was offered by RIFTHP's Director of Political Activities Maureen Martin before a joint hearing of the Senate Education and the Senate Finance Committees on February 12.

The RIFTHP supports the creation of separate councils to preserve the ability of a unified Board of Education to develop broad policy goals while enabling the councils to concentrate on policy concerning either K-12 or higher education.

Since the proposal by the Governor involves Board expansion, the RIFTHP used the opportunity to ask the Assembly to enhance the voice of professional educators. The RIFTHP proposed that the Chair of the K-12 Council and at least two other members be current or former teachers or administrators. Similarly, the RIFTHP urged the Assembly to amend the law to require that the Chair and at least two other members of the post-secondary council be current or former faculty members or administrators. A copy of the letter Parisi submitted to the Committees can be viewed [here](#).



LaborVision is seen on Cox
Ch. 14 and FioS Ch. 33

Tuesdays @ 7PM

Thursday @ 8PM

Saturday @ 5PM

Bill Introductions

If you would like to read the full text of a bill, just click on the bill number.

Common Core Implementation Commission

([S2135](#) Satchell, Senate Education)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would establish a Common Core State Standards Evaluation commission to study and evaluate the Department of Education's standardized testing based on common core curriculum, and shall advise and make recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly as to the adequacy and efficiency of such standardized testing.

Adjunct Faculty Medical Insurance

([S2141](#) Miller, Senate Finance)

The RIFTHP supports this bill whereby adjunct faculty members at any state college, state community college, or state university who teach at least fifty percent (50%) of the faculty load hours worked by regular full time faculty in any academic semester shall be eligible for benefits as provided for in this section.

Teacher Evaluation – Student Achievement Moratorium

([S2184](#) Satchell, Senate Education)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would provide that the evaluation of teaching personnel would be pursuant to local control, and that the process for the evaluation for teachers would be subject to collective bargaining. Measures of student achievement would not be used to evaluate teachers until 2019.

Standardized Testing Graduation Requirement

([S2185](#) Metts, Senate Education)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would provide for certain notifications that would need to be provided to parents or guardians of students identified as performing "significantly below proficient" on any state assessment and would prevent standardized tests from being used as a graduation requirement.

DSP Rate Increase

([S2195](#) DiPalma, Senate Finance)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would provide for the Director of the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and

Hospitals to adopt a state reimbursement system for community and nonprofit agencies that would encourage the hiring and retention of competent, qualified, and caring individuals. Effective April 1, 2014, the reimbursement rate for direct support professionals employed by private developmental disability organizations shall increase to \$13.97 per hour.

Charter School Housing Aid

[\(S2208 Doyle, Senate Finance\)](#)

The RIFTHP opposes this bill which would provide that the percentage of a charter public school's housing costs reimbursed with state aid would be equal to the percentage of school housing costs reimbursed with state aid for the municipality where the charter public school is located. The bill would also provide that before a charter public school would be eligible to access such state aid for reimbursement, the school would need to certify that it had first attempted to utilize vacant school property within the municipality where the charter public school is located.

Coming Up

A series of bills related to using standardized tests as a graduation requirement and using student achievement to evaluate teachers will be heard in the House Health, Education and Welfare Committee on Wednesday, February 26. To view the calendar, [click here](#). Individual bills may be viewed by clicking on the bill number.

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