

*The*

SMITH HILL REPORT



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

Testing Moratorium Approved by Senate

On a decisive 29-5 vote, the Rhode Island Senate passed legislation to place a three year moratorium on using standardized tests such as NECAP as a graduation requirement. Passage of the bill followed several weeks of lobbying. Over 1100 RIFTHP members utilized our on-line email system to contact their Senator in support of the measure. To view how each Senator voted, [click here](#). The bill must still be approved by the House of Representatives before it can be sent to the Governor and become law.

RIFTHP President Frank Flynn thanked the bill sponsor Adam Satchell, Senate Education Committee Chair Hanna Gallo, and the Senate leadership for their support for Rhode Island students. He said "*The Senate Education Committee should be commended for listening to the voices of the students, parents, and teachers, and taking this action. Preventing high school seniors, a large proportion of whom have IEP's, are English language Learners, or receive free or reduced lunch, from graduating based on a NECAP test score would be a travesty. The NECAP was not constructed to be used in this manner and to do so would be an abuse of power by the RIDE.*"

Teacher Evaluation - Cyclical Process

The Senate Education Committee heard testimony on May 14, 2014 on legislation sponsored by Senator Goodwin to alleviate the required annual evaluation for teachers rated effective or highly effective. [S2738](#) would establish in state law a 3 year evaluation cycle for teachers rated effective and a 4 year cycle for teachers rated highly effective. Representative

May 19, 2014

In This Issue

- Testing Moratorium Approved by Senate
- Teacher Evaluation - Cyclical Process
- Adjunct Medical Insurance
- Public Records – School Employees

[Sign up here to receive the Smith Hill Report!](#)

[Senate Contacts](#)

[House Contacts](#)

[Senate/House Committee Assignments](#)

William O'Brien introduced identical legislation in the House. RIFTHP members have already submitted more than 2,000 notecards in support of the bills.

RIFTHP Frank Flynn opened the hearing by calling for the legislation notwithstanding the last-minute plan put forward by Commissioner Gist last month. He said *"The Commissioner in conjunction with the Superintendent's Association recently issued a new guideline which allows local Superintendents the ability to adopt a slightly modified evaluation cycle. It provides some relief for administrators but very little for teachers. This was a step in the right direction but clearly does not go far enough. Application of the guidance is arbitrary and not codified anywhere."* He added *"If the RIDE has faith in the validity of their evaluation process then teachers who have demonstrated proficiency on any of the four, vigorous, RIDE approved evaluation models would not need to go through this lengthy process annually."*

Woonsocket Teacher Guild President Jeff Partington spoke in favor of the Goodwin legislation. He spoke in strong support of a good evaluation system but decried the inability of administrators to focus on new and struggling teachers. He said their system was designed to have one administrator evaluating 12-15 teachers per year, something that is impossible if all teachers have to be evaluated ever year.

West Warwick Teachers Alliance member Pat D'Alfonso spoke about the concerns teachers have raised about how much time has been taken up by the cumbersome SLO process. She said that instruction was losing out when teachers who are effective or highly effective must spend valuable time being evaluated every year.

Cranston Teachers Alliance member Jack Santangelo told the committee about the significant amount of time necessary to complete evaluations, and called for relief from the burdensome requirement. RIFTHP Director of Professional Issues Colleen Callahan ended the testimony with a description of the RIFTHP Innovation model and recounted the history of participating school districts seeking relief from RIDE on the required annual evaluation to no avail. She recognized that the evaluation process itself needs improvement, but that the caseload issue needs to



Rep. John Carnivale, talks about contract continuation legislation and apprenticeship programs.

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

Tuesdays @ 7PM

Thursday @ 8PM

Saturday @ 5PM

be addressed so that effective and highly effective teachers do not need to be evaluated yearly.

Pat Crowley of NEA/RI testified in support of the legislation. Opposition came from MaryAnn Snyder of RIDE, Tim Ryan of the Superintendents Association, Christine Lopes Metcalfe of RI-CAN, a corporate funded charter school advocacy group, and Tim Duffy of the RI Association of School Committees.

Adjunct Medical Insurance

On Thursday, May 8, the House Finance Committee heard testimony on legislation to provide medical insurance for certain adjunct faculty members working in Rhode Island public higher education institutions. [H7642](#) by Rep. Jacquard would permit adjunct faculty who teach 50% of the load of full-time faculty to get medical insurance. This is the second year that the RIFTHP has sought this legislation.

Deborah Kaspin, the President of the Adjunct Faculty Union at Rhode Island College joined RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi in testifying in support of the bill. Parisi described the bill as being a method to determine how faculty, who are not hourly employees, can become eligible for medical insurance in conformance with a state law that requires state workers to be employed 20 or more hour per week. A 50% faculty load is comparable to 20 hours of a 40 hour standard work week. Parisi described how higher education negotiators told the union that they could not even offer state employee medical benefits to someone not at work at least 20 hours per week.

Kaspin told the committee that she had surveyed her membership and that only 27% of her membership indicated a desire to get medical insurance from the state since so many were insured through other employment or through their spouses already. She also described the many duties performed by adjunct faculty that take considerable time in addition to the time in the classroom in front of students. She cited valuable research demonstrating how faculty hours should be calculated. To view a fact sheet on the legislation submitted by the RIFTHP, [click here](#).

Public Records – School Employees

On Thursday, May 8, the Senate Judiciary Committee approved legislation supported by the RIFTHP and other education advocates on a 10-0 vote. The bill, [S2880](#) introduced by Senator Gallo, would extend the privacy protection of Rhode Island's open records law to all school employee evaluations, including superintendents, and other administrators. Similar legislation was heard in the House Judiciary committee on May 14, 2014. That bill, [H8125](#), was introduced by Rep. Johnston.

RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi testified in support of the legislation at the May 14 hearing. He informed the committee that last session, the RIFTHP worked on legislation to ensure that teacher evaluations were not public records subject to the open records law. The RIFTHP was pleased that the Assembly enacted the legislation at the end of the 2013 session. Employee job evaluations had never been subject to open record requests, but a recent change in state law opened the door to the possibility that they could be released. The release of personnel information in other states has caused great unnecessary stress to teachers; something that need not happen in our state.

S2880 and H8125 extend the privacy of evaluation records to all school employees, including school administrators. Since the RIFTHP represents school staff other than teachers, such as teacher assistants, we gladly support the legislation. The House Judiciary Committee voted to hold the bill for further study.

[Connect with us on](#)



[Click here to unsubscribe](#)

© American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO. © 2011

This e-mail and any attachments are confidential and are intended solely for the named addressee(s). If you are not a named addressee, you should not copy, alter, post, forward, distribute or disseminate the contents of the e-mail or attachments. Any views or opinions expressed are solely those of the individual and do not necessarily represent those of American Federation of Teachers (AFT).