
The SMITH HILL REPORT

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Changes at The Assembly

After the abrupt resignation of Representative Raymond Gallison, the Speaker appointed Representative Marvin Abney to Chair the important House Finance Committee. Since the resignation was late in the legislative year, there will not be a special election to fill his vacancy. Instead, it will be filled in November's General election.

After Representative Karen MacBeth changed her party affiliation from Democrat to Republican, the Speaker placed Representative Patricia Serpa as Chair of the House Oversight Committee. Representative Deborah Ruggiero replaced Rep. Serpa as Chair of the House Small Business Committee. Finally, Representative Robert Jacquard was appointed Speaker Pro Tempore.

Membership Mailing

The RIFTHP sent postcards to all RIFTHP members working in K-12 districts asking for their support in urging the Senate to enact local approval legislation for proposed new charter schools. The postcard also enlists member support to sign an electronic petition outlining opposition to the Governor's Empowerment Schools proposal. Members can sign the petition by using the link (rifthp.org/petition)

Bills on the Move

The following bills were passed by the House and have now been transferred to their respective Senate Committees to be heard:

Student Eligibility – End of School Year upon Age 21

([H7050](#) *Azzinaro, Senate Education*)

This bill would provide that where a child with a disability is enrolled in a post-secondary or transitional education program as part of the services provided to the child by the school committee or local educational agency, and such child reaches age 21 during a school or program year, then the school committee or LEA would pay for such child's schooling through to the conclusion of the school or program's academic year. The bill passed the House on 3/10 on a vote of 68-0-7. It was then transferred to the Senate Education Committee the same day.

Dyslexia Targeted Assistance

([H7052](#) *O'Brien, Senate Education*)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would add dyslexia-targeted assistance as a required aspect of the literacy program for students at the elementary grade level. The bill passed the House on 2/3 on a vote of 72-0-2. It was then transferred to the Senate Education Committee on 2/25.

Screening for Reading Disabilities

([H7054](#) *Lombardi, Senate Education*)

This bill would require school districts to conduct screening for dyslexia and other reading disabilities of school children who have exhibited one or more potential indicators using certain screening methods selected by the commissioner of education. This act would take effect upon passage and would be implemented at the commencement of the 2016-2017 school year. It passed the House on 2/3 on a vote of 71-0-4. It was then transferred to the Senate Education Committee on 2/25.

Student Suspensions

([H7056](#) *Diaz, Senate Education*)

This bill would direct all school superintendents to review discipline data for their school district, to decide whether there is an unequal impact on students based on race, ethnicity, or disability status, and to respond to any disparity. Every school district would submit a report to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education describing any action taken on the disparity. All such

reports shall be public records. Also, student suspensions would not be served out of school unless the student's conduct meets certain standards or the student represents a demonstrable threat to students, teachers or administrators. The bill passed the House on 5/4 on a vote of 66-0-8. It was then transferred to the Senate Education Committee on 5/10.

Genocide Education

([H7488A](#) Kazarian, Senate Education)

This bill would require the inclusion of instruction on holocaust and genocide studies in the curriculum for all middle and high school students. The bill passed the House on 5/5 on a vote of 71-0-4. It was then transferred to the Senate Education Committee on 5/10.

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