

---

*The*

# SMITH HILL REPORT



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

---

## **Session Opens**

The 2017 session of the Rhode Island General Assembly opened on Tuesday, January 3. Over the next two months, bills will be introduced and hearings on bills will begin in House and Senate committees. The Governor will give a State of the State address before a joint session of the House and Senate on Tuesday, January 17. She is due to submit her proposed budget for the next Fiscal Year (FY 2018) on Thursday, January 19. Shortly after the budget is introduced, hearings on her spending proposals will be held by both the House Finance Committee and the Senate Finance Committee.

The RIFTHP will continue to publish the Smith Hill Report, a weekly legislative newsletter highlighting important legislation and testimony. The newsletter is sent to local union leaders who then distribute it to union members. Those who want to receive this newsletter directly from the RIFTHP may do so by signing up using the following link: [Sign-Up](#)

## **2016 Election Recap**

### **Local Unions Stepped Up In 2016 General Assembly Races**

The RIFTHP had a long list of endorsed candidates in both September's primary election and in the general election in November. There is no doubt that with increased involvement and participation of the local unions, we were able to beat back most of the challenges to our incumbent supporters at the state house and we helped a few new candidates get elected.

Although many locals were deeply involved in their own municipal races, they made time to organize members and work on the general assembly races to ensure our voices will be heard and our issues will be addressed in the 2017 legislative session.

Only candidates who successfully completed our ten-question survey on issues important to all RIFTHP members were considered for endorsement. Where necessary, interviews were conducted to further explore the candidate's understanding of our issues. Several local unions spent hours in interviews with candidates who were seeking to get elected or re-elected in their districts.

Over 11,000 letters were sent to union members outlining the reasons their local and the RIFTHP were recommending endorsement of candidates in their districts. Additionally, 9,000 “Get Out the Vote” post cards were mailed reminding members to get to the polls on Election Day. Several phone banks were organized when dozens of volunteers contacted thousands of fellow union members to talk about endorsed candidates.

All of this activity resulted in big wins for us in the Senate and the House of Representatives and a few strongly felt losses.

We are glad to see so many of our endorsed incumbents back in the legislature:

**Senate**

S1 Maryellen Goodwin  
S6 Harold Metts  
S7 Frank Ciccone  
S8 James Doyle  
S13 Teresa Paiva-Weed  
S22 Steve Archambault  
S25 Frank Lombardo  
S27 Hanna Gallo  
S29 Michael McCaffrey  
S32 Cynthia Armour Coyne  
S33 Leonidas Raptakis  
S37 Susan Sosnowski

**House**

H2 Chris Blazejewski  
H9 Anastasia Williams  
H11 Grace Diaz  
H12 Joseph Almedia  
H15 Nicholas Mattiello  
H19 Joseph McNamara  
H20 David Bennett  
H22 Joseph Solomon  
H27 Patricia Serpa  
H32 Robert Craven  
H33 Carol Hagen McEntee  
H34 Teresa Tanzi  
H35 Kathleen Fogarty  
H43 Deborah Fellela  
H45 Mia Ackerman  
H46 Jeremiah O’Grady  
H47 Cale Keable  
H53 Thomas Winfield  
H54 William O’Brien  
H59 Jean Philippe Barros  
H60 David Coughlin  
H61 Raymond Johnston  
H63 Katherine Kazarian  
H68 Kenneth Marshall  
H71 Dennis Canario

Endorsed incumbent candidates who were unsuccessful in their campaigns to get re-elected included Senators Juan Pichardo and William Walaska; and Representatives Thomas Palangio, John DeSimone, and Eileen Naughton.

We are also happy to welcome our endorsed candidates who are new-comers to the RI House of Representatives: Camille Vella-Wilkinson H21; Evan Shanley H24; Alex Marszalkowski H52; and Susan Donovan H69.

On the national stage, we congratulate Congressman James Langevin and Congressman David Cicilline for their re-election. For valuable commentary on the Presidential election results please take a moment to view Randi Weingarten’s press release here: [press release](#)

## Charter School Expansion Approved

The RIFTHP and affiliate local unions waged a campaign to oppose a number of charter school expansion proposals that the Commissioner solicited this past fall. While the Achievement First expansion garnered the most attention, the RIFTHP objected to other proposals such as the Segue Institute for Learning's elementary school, and two new charter proposals for schools which would be located in Providence.

RIFTHP members signed over 4,000 postcards asking Governor Raimondo to stop the expansion. Over 2,500 members signed an on-line petition to the Board of Education opposing the expansion. Several short online video ads were produced and can be seen on this website: [AllRIStudentsCount.com](http://AllRIStudentsCount.com).

This year, the Board of Education's Council on Elementary and Secondary Education was required to consider the financial and programmatic impact to school districts and communities by proposed charter school expansion. Commission Wagner provided a bogus analysis by a Brown University affiliated organization funded by charter advocates John and Laura Arnold (formerly of Enron). The so-called analysis ignored the impact of an Achievement First expansion on Providence Public Schools while conjuring assumptions of lifetime earnings of future Achievement First graduates even though Achievement First only goes to grade 4! At the end, special interests promoted by the charter industry prevailed and the Council approved the Achievement First expansion on a 5-3 vote. The Council did defeat the Segue expansion, as well as the Greene School expansion and the proposed new schools.

SIGN UP  
NOW!



register to receive the SHR directly, [click here](#).

---

Sent via [ActionNetwork.org](http://ActionNetwork.org). To update your email address or to stop receiving emails from Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals, please [click here](#).