

The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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RIFTHP Supports Revisions to Reporting Requirements

On Tuesday, May 29, 2018, RIFTHP President Frank Flynn testified in support of legislation that would amend the reporting requirements of school employees in cases of suspected sexual abuse in schools. The bill, [H8232](#) by Rep. O'Brien (who is a member of the Providence Teachers Union), was heard in the House Judiciary Committee. Flynn was joined in support of the bill by a representative of the Attorney General's office.

The legislation changes the requirements so that employees report suspected abuse to the principal or designee, who then makes a report to DCYF. This would prevent multiple reporting of the same incident and clarify how notice is given to state authorities. The bill also requires the Commissioner of Education to develop policies for the reporting requirement. Finally, the bill provides an additional definition to reasonable cause that triggers the reporting requirement. The bill mirrors a bill by Senator Goodwin that has already passed the Rhode Island Senate.

Flynn told the Committee of concerns that had been raised about the current legislation and supported the revisions made by the O'Brien bill. He noted that certain districts place teachers on paid leave while investigating alleged failure to comply with a confusing reporting requirement.

RIFTHP Supports Tax Legislation

While unable to testify in person, the RIFTHP offered written support to two bills that would raise tens of millions of dollars by increasing taxes on the wealthy. The bills were heard in the Senate Finance Committee on Thursday, May ²⁴.

At the May 15, 2018 Council on Elementary and Secondary Education meeting, RIFTHP President Frank Flynn offered several objections to the draft proposal. He and other RIFTHP members will have additional opportunities to raise issues with the draft regulatory changes at future meetings.

[S2072](#) by Senator Adam Satchell, a West Warwick Teachers Alliance member, would tax hedge fund and private equity managers so that they pay taxes on their all their income. Currently, a federal tax loophole allows hedge fund managers to report income as capitol gains, which is taxed at a lower rate. The bill would create a 19% tax on this capitol gains to match the income tax rate levied on high wage earners.

[S2389](#) by Senator Satchell would raise income taxes on those earning more than \$275,000 per year. The bill is necessary to counteract the tax cuts which the state and federal legislatures have given to the wealthy over the past decade.

Bills on the Move

The following bills have passed the Committee process and the full chamber of either the House or the Senate. To be enacted into law, the bill must pass the same process in the other chamber before being sent to the Governor for approval.

School Carbon Monoxide Detectors

[\(H7041 McNamara, Passed House \(74-0-1\)\)](#)

This bill would require that effective January 1, 2019, all school buildings where students are in attendance would be required to have carbon monoxide detectors installed and maintained therein. The bill would also authorize the Fire Safety Code Board of Appeal and Review to promulgate rules and regulations to enforce the provisions of this requirement.

PSAT/SAT Test – Home School Eligibility

[\(H7155 Casey, Passed House \(69-1-5\), Senate Education\)](#)

This bill would include home schooled students in the program to provide the PSAT and SAT free of charge to all Rhode Island public school students for the fiscal year starting July 1, 2018.

Teacher Certification – Troops to Teachers

[\(H7235A Vella-Wilkinson, Sub A Passed House \(73-0-2\)\)](#)

This bill would direct the Department of Education to utilize the federal government's Troops to Teachers program.

Out of School Time Commission

[\(H7413A Casimiro, Sub A Passed House \(70-0-5\)\)](#)

This Resolution creates a House commission to improve and increase the number of quality out of school time learning programs in the state. This bill creates a 13 (thirteen) person state-wide school safety committee which will include 1 (one) RIFTHP appointee. Upon passage on the House Floor, H7413A became Resolution 267.

Unhealthy Food Advertising – Schools

([H7419A](#) *McNamara, Sub A Passed Senate (33-1-3)*)

This act would prohibit the sale and advertising of unhealthy food and beverage products in schools during the school day, since they do not meet minimum federal governmental nutrition standards. On May 30th, H7491A was sent to the Governor to become law or to be vetoed.

St. Joseph Pension Settlement Release

([S2112](#) *Ruggerio, Passed Senate (33-0-3); House Health, Education and Welfare*)

This bill would provide that in connection with judicially approved good faith settlements of claims relating to the St. Joseph Health Services of Rhode Island Retirement Plan, a release by a claimant of one joint tortfeasor shall not discharge other joint tortfeasors unless the release so provides, but shall reduce the claim against the other joint tortfeasors in the amount of the consideration paid.

Bill Introductions

Teacher and Municipal Worker Contract Continuation

([S2927](#) *McCaffrey, Senate Labor*)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would require that the contractual provisions contained in an otherwise expired collective bargaining agreement with certified school teachers and municipal employees would continue until a successor agreement has been reached between the parties.

Required Instruction - Internet Safety

([H8240](#) *Ucci, House Health, Education and Welfare*)

This bill would require that students in the seventh grade receive education in Internet safety.

School Security Employment Standards

([H8252](#) *Giarrusso, House Judiciary*)

This bill would enable all persons with at least two (2) years law enforcement or military work experience to work as a school security employee regardless of the nature, source or amount of their other income.

School Construction – Incentive for Local Architectural Firms

([H8257](#) *Marshall, House Finance*)

This bill would provide increased school housing aid for communities who utilize resident architectural firms, for the architectural services included in a new school or school renovation project.

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