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# SMITH HILL REPORT



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## **Speakman Wins Primary**

June Speakman won the February 4, 2019 primary election to fill the House District 68 Representative seat vacated when Representative-Elect Lauffton Ascencao resigned. She beat challenger Richard Ruggiero, who is a former Bristol Town Council member. June Speakman is a professor at Roger Williams University and is an NEA leader in her local union. She was endorsed by the RI AFL-CIO. June Speakman faces three other candidates in the General election to be held on Tuesday March 5<sup>th</sup>.

## **Labor Bills Heard**

The House Labor Committee heard testimony on two bills supported by the RIFTHP, the AFL-CIO, NEA/RI and other unions. [H5259](#) by Representative Robert Craven would amend the teacher, municipal worker and state employee bargaining laws to conform with the US Supreme Court decision related to agency fees. The bill deletes agency fee provisions from state law and replaces it with a provision acknowledging that unions can charge non-members for grievance representation. The bill also requires that employers provide unions with information on new hires within five days of employment. The State offered some amendments to clarify several sections of the bill.

[H5260](#) by Representative Vella Wilkinson would provide for binding arbitration on all matters, including financial matters, in the teacher and municipal employee statutes. The bill garnered opposition from Cranston Mayor Alan Fung, Central Falls Mayor James Diossa and other municipal and school committee leaders. No vote was taken on either bill at the February 6, 2019 hearing.

## **Proposed Education Aid Increase**

Use the following links to see charts prepared by the House Fiscal Office showing how Governor Raimondo's proposed education budget funds each school district and charter school. The Governor has proposed

approximately a 20 million dollar increase to public school districts and 11 million dollars for charter school expansion. To view her proposed education aid for public school districts for FY 2020, [click here](#). To view her proposed education aid for charter schools for FY 2020, [click here](#). To view the percentage of students attending state and charter schools from each city or town, [click here](#).

## **Bill Introductions**

### **Charter School Admission Criteria**

[\(H5180 Phillips, House Health, Education and Welfare\)](#)

The RIFTHP opposes this bill which would include "admissions criteria for career preparation programs" as an enrollment procedure required to be included in proposals for the creation or expansion of charter schools.

### **Career and Technical Education Centers**

[\(H5266 Shanley, House Health, Education and Welfare\)](#)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would amend the career and technical education program to provide standards in curriculum, additional opportunities for students, and would provide certain tuition formulas and reimbursement rates.

### **\$15 Minimum Wage – Healthcare Workers**

[\(H5269 Blazejewski, House Labor\)](#)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would provide that every health care employer with at least eighteen (18) employees, that either receives five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) or more in funding annually from the state or pays an executive one million dollars (\$1,000,000) or more annually in total compensation shall pay no less than fifteen dollars (\$15.00) per hour to each employee.

### **Tuition Tax Credits**

[\(H5273 Chippendale, House Finance\)](#)

The RIFTHP opposes this bill which would increase the total aggregate amount of tax credits for contributions to scholarship organizations by a business entity meeting the requisite criteria to five million dollars (\$5,000,000) in fiscal year 2020. This bill would also include a new definition for an "eligible business entity".

### **Substance Abuse Prevention Funding**

[\(H5293 Canario, House Judiciary\)](#)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would impose a three hundred dollar (\$300) substance abuse education assessment for any conviction of driving under the influence or a violation for refusal to submit to a breathalyzer. Those funds would be allocated to the Department of Behavioral Health and used to fund substance abuse programs.

## **Resolution – DSP Pay Increase**

([S0059](#) DiPalma, Senate Finance)

The RIFTHP supports this resolution which urges the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to increase certain direct worker wages.

## **Substance Abuse Prevention Funding**

([S0077](#) Miller, Senate Judiciary)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would: (1) Place approval of drug awareness programs for minors up through high school level charged with civil marijuana offenses in the discretion of the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals (BHDDH); (2) Redirect funds from certain civil fines imposed to the general revenue fund to be expended by BHDDH to fund substance abuse and student assistance programs for youth; (3) Mandate that BHDDH establish funding criteria for distribution of funds and require that municipalities receiving funds file annual reports verifying that the funds are being used for substance abuse prevention programs; (4) Make high schools eligible for assistance programs; and (5) Changes the title of chapter 16- 21.3 to reflect high school participation in the programs.

## **Career and Technical Education Tuition Formula**

([S0111](#) Gallo, Senate Education)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would provide that the Department of Education, in consultation with a workgroup composed of various stakeholders, would develop a funding formula for school districts sending students to career and technical programs outside the district.

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