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# SMITH HILL REPORT



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## 2017 Session Disappoints

The 2017 session of the Rhode Island General Assembly officially ended on January 2, 2018 even though the Assembly was in recess since their special session on September 19<sup>th</sup>. The RIFTHP leadership were appreciative of legislative leaders moving ahead on the RIFTHP priority bill – Contract Continuation – as the session wound down at the end of June. The RIFTHP was extremely disappointed when Governor Raimondo vetoed the legislation in early July based on falsehoods and hyperbole being voiced by the school committees, superintendents and mayors.

While the RIFTHP advocated for the Assembly to override the Governor's veto, the Assembly failed to take up the issue when they reconvened to finish legislative business on September 19<sup>th</sup>. Disagreement between the House and Senate on how to handle the override prevented either chamber from voting on the bill even though both chambers passed the bill by large margins. The House passed the bill on a 60-12 vote, and the Senate passed the bill on a 23-7 vote.

RIFTP President Frank Flynn said "the Leadership and members of the RIFTHP are profoundly disappointed that Assembly leaders did not pass contract continuation, a pro worker pro labor bill, especially considering how active the RIFTHP has been in getting politicians who support such legislation elected into office."

## Session Opens

The 2018 session of the Rhode Island General Assembly opened on Tuesday January 2, 2018. The same leadership and committee chairs in place in 2017 continue into the 2018 session. The first month of the session will consist of most bills being introduced into the House and Senate. The budget bill, the most important piece of legislation every year, will be introduced by Governor Raimondo next week.

The RIFTHP will publish regular editions of the Smith Hill Report during the legislative session. The newsletter is sent to local union leaders who then distribute it to their membership. Those who would like to receive this newsletter directly from the RIFTHP may do so by signing up using the following link: [Sign-Up](#)

## **Doyle Resigns**

Senator Jaime Doyle who has represented the 8<sup>th</sup> district in Pawtucket since 2004 announced his resignation from the General Assembly on Tuesday, January 9<sup>th</sup>. He cited personal reasons in his resignation statement. Senator Doyle had received the RIFTHP endorsement in past elections. He served on the Senate Labor and Finance Committees.

A special election will be held to fill the vacancy. The candidate nomination deadline is January 19<sup>th</sup>. If a primary election is necessary, it will be held on Tuesday, February 27<sup>th</sup>. The election will be held on Tuesday, April 3, 2018.

## **Bill Introductions**

### **Required 2 Hours Dyslexia Professional Development**

[\(H7007 Lombardi, House Health, Education and Welfare\)](#)

The RIFTHP opposes this bill which would provide for professional development opportunities relating to reading disabilities and would require two (2) hours of professional development instruction pertaining to reading disabilities for certain general education teachers.

### **Teacher Post Retirement Employment – 100 Days**

[\(H7017 Bennett, House Finance\)](#)

This bill would increase the number of days a retired teacher may substitute teach or be otherwise employed by a school system from ninety (90) days to one hundred (100) days without a reduction or forfeiture of retirement benefits.

### **Student Attendance Review Teams**

[\(H7040 McNamara, House Health, Education and Welfare\)](#)

This bill would direct school districts experiencing high rates of student absenteeism to establish attendance review teams to address this absenteeism and direct the State Department of Education to establish a chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan by January 1, 2019. The bill would also require the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education to include each school district's absenteeism rate within the report on school discipline presented annually to the General Assembly, and to include the school or district's absenteeism rate in any report card or evaluation of the effectiveness of a school or district.

### **School Carbon Monoxide Detectors**

[\(H7041 McNamara, House Health, Education and Welfare\)](#)

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.

### **Tax Credit Scholarship Expansion - \$5 Million**

([H7055](#) *Lancia, House Finance*)

The RIFTHP opposes this bill which would increase the total aggregate amount of tax credits approved for a business entity meeting the requisite criteria to an aggregate amount of all tax credits not exceeding five million dollars (\$5,000,000) in fiscal year 2019. This bill would also include a new definition for an "eligible business entity".

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