
The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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January 16, 2024

Quiet Week

There were no bill hearings this past week at the Rhode Island General Assembly. The House and Senate will continue to have full sessions on a limited basis while bills get drafted, introduced and referred to Committees. The House will be meeting on Tuesdays and Thursdays and the Senate will be meeting on Thursdays for the foreseeable future.

Governor Daniel McKee is scheduled to give his annual State of the State address in a joint session of the House and Senate on Tuesday January 16. His budget will be introduced later this week. The Smith Hill Report will provide an analysis of appropriations and budget articles proposed by the Governor.

Pension Advisory Working Group

The Pension Advisory Working Group is meeting again at 4 PM on Wednesday, January 17. Dan Doonan of the National Institute for Retirement Security will present his findings at the meeting. Several other witnesses are expected to offer testimony. The Pension Advisory Working Group has two additional meetings scheduled on January 31 and February 21, 2024.

The General Treasurer established a link so that retirement system members could submit testimony to the Pension Advisory Working Group. The opportunity for you to describe how the 2011 pension cuts impacted you and your family can be accessed [here](#).

2024 House Committee Assignments

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Bill Introductions

Teacher Retirement - Social Security

([S 2009](#), Burke, Senate Finance)

([H 7026](#), Serpa, House Finance)

These bills would require all public school teachers hired on or after July 1, 2024, to participate in the retirement system social security pursuant to chapter 7 of title 36.

Municipal Post Retirement Employment - 90 Days

([S 2010](#), Rogers, Senate Finance)

This bill would increase the number of days a retired municipal employee could work in a calendar year without interruption of pension benefits to ninety (90) days.

\$30,000,000 For School Safety And Security Improvements

([S 2011](#), Rogers, Senate Finance)

This bill would authorize the appropriation of the sum of \$100,000 to each public school in Rhode Island for school safety and security improvements.

Interlocal Trust Regulations - DBR

([H 7088](#), Brien, House Corporations)

This bill would provide that municipal insurance corporations would be subject to the provisions of the general laws regulating insurance companies, and would be regulated by the Rhode Island Department of Business Regulation.

Captive Audience Meetings

([H 7106](#), Craven, House Labor)

This bill would protect the rights of employees in the workplace relating to free speech, assembly and religion, as well as attendance at employer-sponsored meetings regarding political or religious matters. Employees so aggrieved by discipline or discharge would have the right to bring a civil action against the employer seeking compensatory and punitive damages including attorneys' fees.

Naming of Medical Insurer - Public Sector CBA

([H 7107](#), DeSimone, House Labor)

This bill would repeal the law prohibiting collective bargaining agreements for state employees, public school teachers and municipal employees from requiring that an employer procure a healthcare benefit plan from a specific provider. It would allow governmental employee union contracts to contain specific references to specific health insurance companies.

RI Income Tax Deduction -Student Loan Payments

([H 7120](#), DeSimone, House Finance)

This bill would allow a deduction from federal adjusted gross income for interest payments on outstanding student loans.

School Committee Meeting Notice Agenda - Discussion Items

([H 7129](#), Edwards, House State Government & Elections)

This bill would allow School Committees to add item(s) not appearing in the published notice to their agendas for the purposes of discussion only if the revised agenda is filed with the Secretary of State and posted on the district website at least forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the meeting.

Computer Science Curriculum and Instruction

([H 7146](#), Lombardi, House Education)

This bill would direct the council on Elementary and Secondary Education to develop recommendations for a high school curriculum to prepare students for successful postsecondary education and careers in computer science. This bill would also direct the commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education to consider the council's recommendations and develop academic standards for a computer science high school curriculum. The courses in the computer science curriculum should, to the extent academically feasible, enable a student to utilize computer science courses to meet mathematics and science admission requirements at the State's Colleges and Universities.

Mental Health Curriculum and Instruction

([H 7147](#), Lombardi, House Education)

This bill would require the department of education to develop and make available for use in all schools a mental health curriculum. School districts would be required to provide four (4) hours of mental health instruction to seventh grade students commencing with the 2025-2026 school year and every school year thereafter.

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