

February 13, 2023

Teacher Post-Retirement Employment

On Wednesday, February 8, 2023 RIFTHP President Frank Flynn testified before the House Finance Committee on legislation to extend the time period retired teachers can work without loss of pension benefits. Current state law permits retirees to work 90 days in a school year without forfeiting pension benefits. Legislation by Rep. Bill O'Brien ([H 5040](#)) would extend the time period to 120 days in a school year.

Flynn and others testified that there is a severe shortage of substitute teachers and that extending the time retirees could work would benefit student education. Flynn testified that sometimes retirees hold specialized training and certification in hard-to-fill subject areas that would be lost if the retirees could no longer be utilized because of the 90-day limit. He submitted written testimony on the bill which can be viewed [here](#). In addition to the RIFTHP President, a Providence retiree working as a teacher, Tim Ryan representing the Superintendents, and Andy Andrade representing the Rhode Island Department of Education all testified in support of the bill.

During the Committee discussion, concern was raised about the impact that the bill could have on the pension fund since retirees do not contribute to the pension fund when retirees fill positions (as opposed to being deployed as a per diem sub). Flynn noted that current law, unchanged by the O'Brien legislation, requires school districts to demonstrate that they made an effort to hire a non-retiree into a position before it is offered to a retiree. Those testifying indicated that perhaps the length of time should be extended beyond 120 days. The House Finance Committee discussed the bill and voted to hold the bill for further study.

To view a Providence Journal article on the issue, click [here](#).

Budget Hearings Commence

The House Finance Committee and the Senate Finance Committee have begun committee hearings on budget articles and department appropriations. The RIFTHP follows several departmental budget hearings beyond the RI Department of Education and has identified several issues in budget articles in the Governor's proposed budget. Those issues will be reported in future editions of the Smith Hill Report.

Resources

In previous editions of the Smith Hill Report, we have published contact information for Representatives and Senators as well as committee membership of the House and Senate. To view these lists, click on the following;

[House of Representatives](#)

[Senate](#)

[House Committee Assignments](#)

[Senate Committee Assignments](#)

Bill Introductions

Teacher / Staff / Student Bereavement

([H 5222](#), Casimiro, House Education)

This bill would provide that in the event of the death of an educator or a student, a local educational agency would be given up to five (5) days after the death to implement a flexible school schedule for teachers and students. This bill would also amend the title of chapter 16-21.7 to "The Nathan Bruno, Jason Flatt, and Alicia Biros Bereavement Act."

Voter Initiative

([H 5236](#), Perez, House State Government & Elections)

This resolution would enable the citizens of Rhode Island to propose laws and amendments to the Constitution through an initiative and referendum process, except as to revenue and appropriations, which power remains vested in the General Assembly.

Fractional COLA

([H 5240](#), McEntee, House Finance)

This bill would provide that the current COLA suspension schedule would be replaced with a fractional annual COLA of twenty-five percent (25%) of the COLA declared for that plan year, as it pertains to retired teachers, state and municipal employees.

Consumer Science Education

([H 5251](#), Sanchez, House Education)

This bill would require all public high schools to offer as part of the curriculum a nutrition, food preparation and cooking course.

Universal Pre-K

([H 5253](#), McNamara, House Finance)

This bill would require the department of education to provide a statewide, universal prekindergarten, early childhood education program for all three (3), four (4), and five (5)-year-old children by September 1, 2025.

Public School Lockdown Drills

([H 5278](#), McNamara, House Education)

This bill would increase the number of lockdown drills required to be done in every school from two (2) per school year to four (4) per school year. This bill would also eliminate the requirement for two (2) yearly evacuation drills.

Higher Education Students and Staff - Vaccination Policy

([H 5279](#), Perez, House Education)

This bill would prohibit discrimination in postsecondary education of students who are enrolled in graduate or professional degree programs, along with faculty members and other staff in those programs, who are granted medical or religious vaccine exemptions by a sponsoring university or college.

Arming Campus Police

([H 5299](#), O'Brien, House Judiciary)

This bill would mandate arming campus police at public higher educational institutions and would include campus police in the definition of "law enforcement officer" for the purposes of the "Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights."

School Closure - Presidential Primaries

([H 5305](#), Carson, House State Government & Elections)

This bill would mandate that on each primary for election of national convention delegates and elections for presidential preference primaries, that all public elementary and secondary schools be closed.

DCYF Student Scholarship Program

([H 5320](#), Place, House Finance)

This bill would provide a scholarship allowing a student in the care and custody of the department of Children, Youth and Families to attend Rhode Island College without the payment of tuition and room and board as long as they meet the eligibility requirements of the program and the admission criteria of Rhode Island College.

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