



The

# SMITH HILL REPORT



PUBLISHED BY THE RHODE ISLAND FEDERATION OF TEACHERS & HEALTH PROFESSIONALS/AFT, AFL-CIO

## Pension Information Now Available

Information about the settlement of litigation surrounding the recent pension cuts to vested teachers, state workers and certain municipal workers and retirees can be viewed at the website [RIPensionInfo.org](http://RIPensionInfo.org).

## Due Process Debated

Two bills concerning teacher terminations and layoffs were heard by the House Labor Committee on February 11. One bill, [H7193](#) introduced by Rep. Guthrie, would expand the statutory definition of layoff to include all types of layoffs and move the notification date to May 15. His bill would preserve the March 1 notification date for the non-renewal of non-tenured teachers and the termination of tenured teachers. The other bill, [H7026](#) by Rep. Ruggiero, would change the notification date for all layoffs and terminations to June 1 and would specifically permit a teacher to get fired for budget cuts and program reorganization.

RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi testified in support of the Guthrie bill and in opposition to the Ruggiero bill. He supported the notion that a later notification date for layoffs would be acceptable as long as the later date applied to **all** layoffs and not just those caused by student population decline. Parisi vigorously objected to the other bill, noting that our members would never accept firing teachers for budget and reorganization decisions since those have been handled by layoffs, not final terminations, for decades. He noted that those who oppose the Guthrie bill want to use the opportunity of layoffs to get rid of teachers who are otherwise protected by due process under our tenure law. Joining Parisi in supporting the Guthrie bill and opposing the Ruggiero bill was Patrick Crowley of the NEA/RI. Testifying on the opposite side was Andy Andrade representing RIDE and Tim Duffy of the RI Association of School Committees.

## Bill Introductions

If you would like to read the full text of a bill, just click on the bill number.

### **STEM Higher Education Tax Credit**

([H7183](#) *Blazejewski, House Finance*)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would establish the "Job Creation through Educational Opportunity Program Act of 2014." The purpose of this program would be to create incentives for individual residents of this

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State to pursue higher education in science, technology, engineering, and design, and to remain within this state after attaining a post-secondary degree. One of the key components of this program would be an educational opportunity tax credit which could be claimed for certain expenses associated with post-secondary education, as calculated by the mechanisms provided in this chapter.

#### **Layoff Notification Date - Definition of Seniority**

([H1793](#) Guthrie, Senate Finance)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would expand the circumstances whereby a school committee could lay teachers off.

#### **Pay it Forward**

([H7201](#) Fox, House Health, Education and Welfare)

The RIFTHP opposes this bill which would establish a "Pay it Forward, Pay it Back" pilot program whereby students enrolled in RI colleges/universities in lieu of paying fees, sign a binding contract with the State whereby they pay a percentage of their annual adjusted gross income for a number of years.

#### **Mayoral Academy Staff - Pension Participation**

([H7212](#) Fellela, House Finance)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would require Mayoral Academy staff to participate in the state teachers' retirement system.

#### **State Employee Longevity Compensation**

([H7322](#) San Bento, House Finance)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would restore collective bargaining over longevity payments for any state employee, as well as, any employees of the RI Board of Education and of quasi-public corporations.

## Coming Up

On Tuesday, March 4 at the rise, the House Finance Committee will hear testimony on [Article 17](#). Section 1 is the proposal to eliminate future supplemental pension funding out of surplus state revenue. Section 7 is a related proposal to delete state law that requires the State to make a pension contribution based on 5.5% of state privatization contracts.

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with Mike Sabitoni and  
Scott Duhamel

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House -Senator Jack  
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