

*The*

# SMITH HILL REPORT



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

## Standardized Testing Scrutinized

Three bills introduced to reign in the standardized test graduation requirement were heard in the Senate Education Committee on Wednesday, February 26. RIFTHP President Frank Flynn testified in support of all three bills. [S2059](#) by Senator Adam Satchell would impose a five year moratorium on using standardized tests as a student graduation requirement. [S2135](#) also sponsored by Senator Satchell would create a commission to investigate the Common Core standards and would prevent the administration of tests associated with the Common Core until the commission issued its final report. Finally, [S2185](#) by Senator Harold Metts would prevent the use of standardized tests as a graduation requirement and would require “intervention assistance” for students who are significantly below proficient on state assessments.

Last year, the Assembly passed a resolution ([Joint Resolution 424](#)) that asked the Board of Education to **“reconsider the current graduation requirements including the use of the state assessment and examine using a weighted compilation of the state assessment, coursework performance, and senior project or portfolio”**. The Assembly also asked the Board of Education to **“delay the state assessment portion of the graduation requirement to allow for adequate time for students to be immersed in the common core curriculum”**. Our Board of Education has ignored the resolution, failing to address either of the requests from the General Assembly to date, while as many as 1,200 Rhode Island seniors stand at risk of failing to graduate this spring.

March 31, 2014

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RIFTHP President Frank Flynn testified in support of the bills, focusing his attention on the reasonableness of a five (5) year moratorium on the use of standardized tests like NECAP and PARCC as a graduation requirement. He voiced a sense of urgency, speaking of personal experience that high school seniors not eligible to graduate are likely to drop out before the school year is over, never returning from April school vacation. He also spoke about the amount of time teachers and the rest of the school community need to spend on a new set of standards before using tests with high stakes. He also reminded the Education Committee that NECAP was never designed to assess individual student performance with high stakes attached.

RIFTHP Director of Professional Issues Colleen Callahan also testified in support of the legislation. She noted that the AFT is a supporter of the rigorous set of standards that make up the Common Core, but that concerns arise in how the standards are being rolled out and the stakes attached to them. She talked about the time and tools needed to support teachers in successfully implementing the new standards and the need to put a hold on high stakes testing as a graduation requirement. She cited Massachusetts slowing down the implementation of the PARCC assessment while more information is gathered.

Other RIFTHP members in support of the bill were Christina DiPrete (a Pawtucket Teachers' Alliance Vice-President and high school math teacher), Joanne Avedesian (a Coventry Teachers' Alliance member and guidance counselor), Marianne Davidson (a Providence Teachers Union Vice-President and guidance counselor) and Alex Lucini (the Providence Teachers Union Treasurer and music teacher). The NEA/RI, the ACLU, members of the Providence Student Union, parents, grandparents and other educators all joined in support of the legislative package.

Opponents to the bill and advocates for the status quo were the Superintendent's Association, the RI Association of School Committees, Commissioner Gist, RI-CAN (a corporate charter school advocacy organization), and several members of the business community.



Legislative Issues,  
hosted by James Parisi,  
with Paula Hodges of  
Planned Parenthood, SE  
New England,  
discussing the RI  
Constitutional  
Convention

AFL-CIO Convention  
part 4

AFL-CIO Convention  
part 3

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LaborVision is seen on Cox  
Ch. 14 and FioS Ch. 33

Tuesdays @ 7PM

Thursday @ 8PM

Saturday @ 5PM

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## Gubernatorial Candidates Forum

A 2014 Rhode Island Gubernatorial Candidates Forum will be hosted by the Economic Progress Institute on April 7, 2014. This free forum will be held at the Ocean State Theatre, 1245 Jefferson Boulevard, Warwick, RI 02886. It will take place from 5:00PM to 6:30PM. To register, go to: [Gubernatorial Candidates Forum Registration](#). Send a question(s) that you want asked of the candidates to [info@economicprogressri.org](mailto:info@economicprogressri.org).

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## Bill Introductions

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

### **Full Day Kindergarten Funding** ([Press Release](#))

([S2791 Gallo](#), *Senate Education*)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would prioritize the awarding of state aid for the implementation of full-day kindergarten programs. The Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education would rank all eligible school districts. Ranking would be based on the quality and sustainability of each program. Districts with eight thousand (8000) or more students would be given priority.

### **Board of Education Reorganization**

([S2265 Gallo](#), *Senate Education*)

The RIFTHP supports this bill would establish a permanent governance structure for the Rhode Island Board of Education.

### **Mayoral Academy Teacher Pensions**

([S2310 Jabour](#), *Senate Education*)

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

### **Higher Education – Tuition Equity**

([S2345 Pichardo](#), *Senate Finance*)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would identify those students who are exempt from paying non-resident tuition at public universities, colleges or community colleges.

### **Student Assistance Program Funding**

([S2351 Miller](#), *Senate Health and Human Services*)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would redirect substance abuse prevention funds to "Student Assistance Programs".

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## Coming Up

On Wednesday, [April 2](#), at the rise, the House Finance Committee will hear testimony on [H7424](#) (Teacher-Purchase Supplies - Tax Credit, Morgan), [H7471](#) (Rhode Island Tax Equity, Cimini) and [H7552](#) (Tax Equity, Valencia). Also on [April 2](#) at the rise, the House Health, Education and Welfare Committee will hear testimony on [H7672](#) (Standardized Test - Graduation Requirement - Prohibition, Naughton).

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