

The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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

State Surplus, State Pension Contribution Addressed

On Tuesday, March 24, RIFTHP Director of Political Activities Maureen Martin spoke in support of legislation that would require the yearly state contribution to the pension system not be reduced until the fund ratio meets or exceeds eighty percent (80%). In testimony on [H5731](#) (Handy) before the House Finance Committee, Martin reminded the committee that teachers and state employees' ability to receive a future COLA increase on their pension benefit depended on a healthy pension fund.

At the same hearing, Martin testified against [H5140](#) (Shekarchi) a bill that would direct fifty percent of any state surplus to cities and towns instead of placing the entire surplus into the retirement system as current law dictates. Martin again reminded the committee that teachers and state retiree COLA's are dependent on a healthy fund and diverting 50% of the surplus would postpone the restoration of teacher and state retiree COLAs.

Both bills were held for further study.

Certification Renewal Bill Introduced

On Wednesday, March 25, before the Senate Education Committee, RIFTHP testified in support of [S0155](#) (Picard), an act that would require the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to provide an e-mail notice to teachers and other licensed public school personnel when any action of recertification, revocation, or repeal of their license is proposed and pending. In testimony, RIFTHP Director

March 30, 2015

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of Political Activities Maureen Martin acknowledged to the committee that it does happen occasionally that teachers or other certified personnel let their certification date slip by, sometimes causing a problem for the employee and the school district.

Martin suggested to the committee that this change would be a way to streamline the process and prevent what is an oversight. Martin also reminded the committee that the certification fees have gone up in the recent past and it follows that this added service or courtesy could be afforded.



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

Tuesday @ 7PM

Thursday @ 7PM

Saturday @ 5PM

Teacher Dismissal Hearing Change Proposed

Also on Wednesday, March 25, before the Senate Education Committee, RIFTHP testified in opposition to [S0201](#) (DiPalma), an act that would provide that teacher dismissal cases could be heard by less than an entire school board. Martin noted to the committee that, if this act were passed, only one little word, "full" would be deleted from the teacher tenure law but that the ramifications could be huge for a teacher whose career could be in jeopardy. Martin said that teaching is more like a calling to our teachers, so great care must be made in any termination decision. She questioned the fairness of a life altering decision being made by what could be only a few school board members instead of a full board.

Speaking in favor of S0201 were representatives from the RI Association of School Committees and the RI Association of School Superintendents.

Coming Up

On Wednesday, April 1 at the Rise of the House, the House Health, Education and Welfare Committee will consider [H5845](#) by Rep. Amore, a bill that would allow parents and legal guardians to elect to have their child opt out of Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for Colleges or "PARCC" assessment, or similar assessments.

Bill Introductions

Contract Service Providers - Disclosure of Salaries

([H5110](#) *Serpa, House Finance*)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would require entities providing certain social services to the State to disclose the salaries of the top 10 highest paid administrators.

Standardized Tests - Parental Opt-Out

([H5845](#) *Amore, House Health, Education and Welfare*)

The RIFTHP supports this act which allows parents and legal guardians to elect to have their child opt out of Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for Colleges or "PARCC" assessment, or similar assessments.

Budget Commission Authority - Employment

([S0104](#) *Picard, Senate Finance*)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would prohibit a budget commission

from selecting, hiring and/or firing specific city, town, educational, police and/or fire district employees.

Teacher and Municipal Worker Contract Continuation

([S0446](#) McCaffrey, Senate Labor)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would require that the contractual provisions contained in a collective bargaining agreement with certified school teachers and municipal employees would continue until a successor agreement has been reached between the parties.

Music Education Requirement

([S0459](#) Picard, Senate Education)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would require public schools to offer courses in musical performing arts.

Tax Equity – Municipal Aid

([S0468](#) Satchell, Senate Finance)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would provide for revenue sharing with municipalities commencing in fiscal year 2016, based upon three percent (3%) of total state tax revenues. It would also impose a two percent (2%) tax increase on personal income over two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) commencing January 1, 2016.

Tax Equity – Municipal Aid and School Construction

([S0472](#) Satchell, Senate Finance)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would impose tax increases on personal income, with the revenue collected therefrom to be deposited into restricted receipt accounts for the purposes of state aid to municipalities and reimbursement of public school construction.

Senate/House Contacts

To view a list of all 38 Senate members, including mail, phone and e-mail contact information, [click here](#).

To view a list of all 75 House members, including mail, phone and e-mail contact information, [click here](#).

This contact information will also be posted at the RIFTHP website at www.RIFTHP.org/GAInfo.

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