

*The*

# SMITH HILL REPORT



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## Education Formula Revision Article Scheduled

Governor Raimondo proposed some modest revisions to the education aid funding formula to allow school districts to deduct a small portion of their charter school payments in recognition of expenses school districts incur which charter schools do not. The proposed education formula deduction is \$355 per pupil. She also proposed a \$300 state payment for districts that enroll more than 5% of their students in charter schools. These provisions are contained in [Article 11](#) of the State Budget. The House Finance Committee will hold a hearing on Article 11 on Thursday, March 31, 2016.

The charter school industry is already organizing opposition to the Governor's small changes. The RIFTHP will be asking the Assembly to adopt the Governor's plan while further adjusting the formula to deduct payments to mayoral charter schools because they do not participate in the state pension plan. The attached [chart](#) reveals how much money school districts spend on pensions compared to mayoral charter schools that were allowed to opt-out of the state teacher pension plan.

## Rhode Island Presidential Primary

Rhode Island's Presidential Primary is **Tuesday, April 26**. In order to be eligible to vote, you must register by **Saturday, March 27**. For those in need of an absentee ballot, the deadline for requesting a mail ballot is April 5, 2016, though emergency ballots may be requested after that date. On April 26, voters will be able to pick a presidential candidate and elect convention delegates for their chosen candidate.

## Representative McNamara - Irish Poet

The Rhode Island General Assembly has a tradition of celebrating St. Patrick's Day and St. Joseph's Day every year. The annual celebration has recently included an Irish-themed poem crafted by Representative Joseph McNamara. This year's poem was both historical and timely, as it was read the day after the Statehouse was packed with advocates of undocumented immigrants seeking to obtain driving privileges from the State of Rhode Island. His 2016 poem was read to the entire House on March 16, 2016.

## **“1854 Redux:”**

The famine pushed the Irish huddled mass across the sea  
And many heard Rhode Island was the land of liberty  
The Irish had to deal with bigotry and hate  
The natives shouted epithets such as ‘Micks on the Make’  
And some feared that the Irish laborers would steal their jobs  
Even churches weren’t immune from hostile, anti-Irish mobs  
The new Know-Nothing party started secretly to meet  
“No Irish Need Apply” signs sprouted up along the street  
The party fed on people’s insecurity and fears  
Reflected anti-Irish prejudice of English heirs  
Know-Nothings came to power in the vote of ’54  
But by the next election, wiser heads showed them the door.  
Each Irish immigrant and every famine refugee  
Faced bigotry and hatred [in] the Land of Liberty  
Hate reared its ugly head to them in city, town and range  
It really is a tragedy that some things never change  
Those early Irish immigrants (poor things!), they never saw  
That their descendants would stand here and help to make the law  
And since the children of those immigrants now lead the way  
can’t forget the pain that’s felt by refugees today  
Being Irish and American will be forever tied  
To our freedoms and our birthright — a tremendous source of pride.  
Movements that appeal only to prejudice and fear  
Are a threat to civil rights that all Americans hold dear.

## **Bill Introductions**

### **Charter School Funding – Charter Tuition**

[\(H7926\)](#) *O’Grady, House Finance*

The RIFTHP supports this act which would add charter tuitions to the calculation used to determine local per-pupil cost.

### **Constitution - Voter Initiative**

[\(S2619\)](#) *Cote, Senate Special Legislation*

The RIFTHP opposes this joint resolution which would propose an amendment to the State Constitution, by establishing a voter initiative process to allow voters to initiate proposed legislation which would, upon a majority vote of the electorate, become law.

## **Voter Initiative**

[\(S2620 Cote, Senate Special Legislation\)](#)

The RIFTHP opposes this act which would provide a detailed process by which a proponent of a voter initiative and referendum proposal would present the proposal to the Secretary of state, the General Assembly and the Governor.

## **Teacher Termination – Notice**

[\(S2648 DiPalma, Senate Labor\)](#)

The RIFTHP opposes this act which would provide that only reasonable notice and a hearing needs to be provided to a teacher dismissed for just cause. Teacher termination for just cause would not be subject to the March 1 deadline for notifying a teacher that their contract will not be renewed for the next school year.

## **Teacher Survivor Benefits Increase**

[\(S2679 Da Ponte, Senate Finance\)](#)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would increase the monthly minimum benefits of spouses and domestic partners of deceased members, and would authorize additional yearly non-compounded adjustments.

## **Charter School Funding – Dual Pathways**

[\(S2739 Pearson, Senate Finance\)](#)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would: (1) Provide that mayoral academies would be funded in full by the state for both core and non-core expenditures; (2) Provide a dual-path application process for charter schools other than mayoral academies to be funded either in full by the state, or by both local communities and the state; (3) Require applicants for mayoral academies to provide a fiscal impact statement which details the anticipated fiscal impact of the mayoral academy on the State Budget if the mayoral academy is permitted to operate and grows to its highest projected enrollment for the five year period following approval; (4) Establish a municipal core instruction fund to improve the ability of cities and towns to support core instructional activities through local expenditures; and (5) Provide that local city and town councils would have the opportunity to approve applications for new charter public schools or the expansion of charter public schools in their communities if the charter public schools are seeking to be funded by the local communities.

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