
The

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Fair Shot Agenda

On Thursday, January 12, 2017, one third of the membership of the Rhode Island House of Representatives attended a press conference to announce a package of four bills labeled the “Fair Shot Agenda.” The legislation will be introduced soon and will be closely followed by the RIFTHP.

“In the aftermath of the November elections and in the midst of decades of economic policy that has continually tilted the scales toward the wealthy and large corporations, a group of House Democrats came together to craft an economic agenda that gives voice to the many, many working Rhode Islanders who believe their government has been unresponsive to their struggles,” said **Rep. Gregg Amore** (D-East Providence). “Today we are here to announce that, together, we will work this session on this concrete agenda to make sure that every Rhode Islander has an opportunity to succeed.” The four pieces of the “Fair Shot Agenda” consist of earned paid sick days, a \$15 minimum wage, school building repairs, and a fairer tax system that reduces the car tax for working families by asking the wealthiest Rhode Islanders to pay their fair share.

“The idea behind this agenda is simple: everyone deserves a fair shot at a decent life. You shouldn’t get a shortcut just because you were born rich, and you shouldn’t get shut out just because you weren’t,” said **Rep. Aaron Regunberg** (D-Providence).

Rep. Marcia Ranglin-Vassell (D-Providence), who has been a fierce advocate of “Fight for \$15,” explained why legislators feel so strongly about this piece of the agenda. “No Rhode Islander who works full-time should live in poverty. Yet we know that many of our constituents, despite working hard every day, remain stuck in poverty. That’s not right. Legislation to increase the minimum wage to a \$15 per hour living wage by 2022, including a first step to \$11 this year, will help working families get by.

The legislators’ agenda also stressed the need for the state to increase its investment in repairing public school buildings. “Every day we are sending our children to school in buildings that do not meet the most basic criteria of being safe, warm and dry,” said **Rep. Katherine Kazarian** (D-East Providence). “There are schools where buckets are placed to catch leaks in the halls when it rains. There are schools that lack heat in the winter. There are schools where mold and asbestos are a constant threat to the health of our children and our teachers.”

The fourth piece of the legislative package includes a plan to reduce the car tax to create a system that better balances middle class and wealthier families. “Over the course of time our tax system has been redesigned to benefit the wealthy by shifting the tax burden onto working families,” said **Rep. Jean Philippe Barros** (D-Pawtucket). “We know that in recent years, most new income is going to the top 1%. To change this, we need a fairer tax system - one that does not ask the most from working families who least can afford it. That’s why the “Fair Shot Agenda” proposes to reduce

the regressive car tax for the middle class in what we believe is the most responsible way, by asking the wealthiest among us to pay their fair share.”

Legislators present for the package rollout included:

Rep. Edie Ajello (D-Providence)
Rep. Gregg Amore (D-East Providence)
Rep. Jean Philippe Barros (D-Pawtucket)
Rep. David Bennett (D-Warwick)
Rep. Chris Blazejewski (D-Providence)
Rep. Julie Casimiro (D - Exeter, North Kingstown)
Rep. Helder Cunha (D-East Providence)
Rep. Grace Diaz (D-Providence)
Rep. Susan Donovan (D-Bristol, Portsmouth)
Rep. Kathy Fogarty (D-South Kingstown)
Rep. Arthur Handy (D-Cranston)
Rep. Katherine Kazarian (D-East Providence)
Rep. Jason Knight (D-Barrington, Warren)
Rep. Shelby Maldonado (D-Central Falls)
Rep. Michael Morin (D-Woonsocket)
Rep. Jeremiah O’Grady (D-Lincoln)
Rep. Marcia Ranglin-Vassell (D-Providence)
Rep. Aaron Regunberg (D-Providence)
Rep. Deborah Ruggiero (D-Jamestown)
Rep. Evan Shanley (D-Warwick)
Rep. Scott Slater (D-Providence)
Rep. Teresa Tanzi (D-South Kingstown, Narragansett)
Rep. Camille Vella-Wilkinson (D-Warwick)
Rep. Moira Walsh (D-Providence)
Rep. Anastasia Williams (D-Providence)

Committee Assignments Announced

After General Elections, committee assignments are usually modified. New Committee assignments were announced last week. A list of all committee assignments can be viewed here. The committees that hear most of the legislation lobbied by the RIFTHP are:

House Finance:

Marvin L. Abney (D), Chair
Kenneth Marshall (D), First Vice-Chair
Teresa Ann Tanzi (D), Sec. Vice-Chair
Gregg Amore (D)
Jean-Phillipe Barros (D)
Grace Diaz (D)
John G. Edwards (D)
Antonio Giarrusso (R)
Joy Hearn (D)
Alex Marszalkowski (D)
James N. McLaughlin (D)
Kenneth J. Mendonca (R)
Michael Morin (D)
William W. O’Brien (D)
Robert J. Quattrocchi (R)
Deborah L. Ruggiero (D)

Scott Slater (D)
Teresa Ann Tanzi (D)
Carlos E. Tobon (D)

House Health, Education and Welfare:

Joseph M. McNamara (D), Chair
Dennis M. Canario (D), Vice-Chair
Mia A. Ackerman (D), Sec. Vice-Chair
Samuel A. Azzinaro (D)
David A. Bennett (D)
Julie A. Casimiro (D)
Susan R. Donovan (D)
Arthur Handy (D)
Robert B. Lancia (R)
Shelby Maldonado (D)
Ramon A. Perez (D)
Robert D. Phillips (D)
Marcia R. Ranglin-Vassell (D)
Sherry Roberts (R)
Moira J. Walsh (D)

House Labor:

Robert E. Craven, Sr. (D), Chair
Mary Messier (D), Vice-Chair
Stephen M. Casey (D), Sec. Vice-Chair
Christopher R. Blazejewski (D)
Helder J. Cunha (D)
John G. Edwards (D)
Deborah A. Fellela (D)
Kathleen A. Fogarty (D)
Kenneth A. Marshall (D)
Carol Hagan McEntee (D)
Daniel P. McKiernan (D)
Robert A. Nardolillo (R)
Brian C. Newberry (R)
Jared R. Nunes (D)
Aaron J. Regunberg (D)
Stephen R. Ucci (D)

Senate Finance:

Daniel DaPonte (D), Chair
Louis P. DiPalma (D), 1st Vice-Chair
Walter S. Felag, Jr. (D), 2nd Vice-Chair
Ryan W. Pearson (D), Secretary
James E. Doyle, II (D)
Maryellen Goodwin (D)
Nicholas D. Kettle (R)
James A. Seveney (D)
V. Susan Sosnowski (D)

Senate Education:

Hanna M. Gallo (D), Chair
Harold M. Metts (D), Vice-Chair
Adam J. Satchell (D), Secretary

Louis P. DiPalma (D)
Thomas J. Paolino (R)
Ryan W. Pearson (D)
Ana B. Quezada (D)
James A. Seveney (D)
James C. Sheehan (D)

Senate Labor:

Paul W. Fogarty (D), Chair
Frank Lombardo, III (D), Vice-Chair
Frank S. Lombardi (D), Secretary
Frank A. Ciccone, III (D)
James E. Doyle, II (D)
Mark W. Gee (R)
Gayle L. Goldin (D)
Maryellen Goodwin (D)
Michael J. McCaffrey (D)

Bill Introductions

Retirement Income Tax Exemption Increase - \$15,000 to \$30,000

([H5024](#) *McNamara, House Finance*)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would increase the exemption for retirement income from state income tax from \$15,000 to \$20,000 commencing in 2018.

Required Dyslexia Teacher Professional Development

([H5048](#) *J.Lombardi, House Health, Education and Welfare*)

The RIFTHP opposes this act which would provide for professional development opportunities relating to reading disabilities and would require two (2) hours of professional development instruction pertaining to reading disabilities for certain general education teachers.

Teacher Survivor Benefit Increase

([H5071](#) *Amore, House Finance*)

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

\$15 Minimum Wage – DD Direct Service Professionals

([H5107](#) *Barros, House Labor*)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would, commencing on January 1, 2018, require that all developmental disabilities organizations that employ five (5) employees or more and who are reimbursed for such services by the state, to pay their employees at least fifteen (\$15.00) dollars per hour.

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