
The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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

March 6, 2017

Binding Arbitration Bill Heard

The RIFTHP testified in support of a bill that would change the current municipal worker bargaining law to provide that arbitration is binding on all issues. The bill, [H5313](#) by Representative David Bennet, also contains a provision that the expired contract remains in place while a new contract is being negotiated by the parties. All non-certified school workers bargain under the municipal worker law, including RIFTHP members in five school systems.

RIFTHP Lobbyist James Parisi testified that the union prefers bargaining over arbitration, but that we need a law change to have a bargaining process when the parties are at impasse. He noted arbitration does not favor employees over management and cited several examples. He also argued that it is unacceptable for workers not to have contract protection while a new contract is negotiated. Without contract protection, employers can change terms and conditions of employment unilaterally. He cited a recent court decision in a Warwick Teacher Union case as an example where the judiciary impaired worker rights when it prevented grievances from being processed under an expired contract.

Testifying in support of the legislation was Tony Capezza of the National Association of Government Employees (NAGE), Jim Cenerini of AFSCME Council 94, Scott Small, an AFSCME union leader in Warwick, and Mark Manchino of the RI AFL-CIO. Testifying against the bill were Tim Ryan of the RI School Superintendents Association, Tim Duffy of the RI Association of School Committees, Brian Daniels of the RI League of Cities and Towns, and John Simmons of RIPEC, a business lobby organization.

Fix Our Schools Now

On Monday, February 27th, a coalition dedicated to increase state support to fix our public school buildings, held a forum at the Providence Career and Technical Academy. The RIFTHP is a founding member of the coalition and a number of RIFTHP leaders and members were in attendance at the forum. The first panel consisted of Erika Eitland of the Harvard School of Public Health, Architect Chin Lin, Dr. Daphne Koinis Mitchell of the Brown Medical School, and Jullian Rodriguez-Drix of the RI Department of Health. These

speakers highlighted the value of fixing our schools to improve educational outcomes for students, as well as to improve the health of students, teachers and other school staff.

The second panel of the forum consisted of General Treasurer Seth Magaziner, Senator Ryan Pearson, Representative Gregg Amore (an East Providence High School teacher), and Jerry Drummond of National Grid. This panel discussed several strategies the state and school districts could consider to fund improvements in public school buildings. RI AFL-CIO President George Nee finished by highlighting a number of legislative and regulatory issues on which the coalition will be working to improve Rhode Island public school facilities. To view the policy platform presented at the meeting and a list of participating organizations, [click here](#).

Bill Introductions

Teacher and Municipal Employee Contract Continuation

([S0285](#) *McCaffrey, Senate Labor*)

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

Tax Equity – Municipal Aid

([S0308](#) *Satchell, Senate Finance*)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would provide for revenue sharing with municipalities commencing in fiscal year 2018, based upon three percent (3%) of total state income 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, 2018.

Tax Equity

([S0311](#) *Satchell, Senate Finance*)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would provide for the imposition of a two (2%) tax increase on personal income over two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000).

Mayoral Academy / MET Funding – Pension Costs

([S0313](#) *Satchell, Senate Finance*)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would provide for a reduction to local per pupil funding for state-operated schools that do not have teachers who participate in the state teacher's retirement system.

Retirement Income Tax Exemption Increase - \$15,000 to \$25,000

([S0323](#) *P. Fogarty, Senate Finance*)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would exempt from personal income tax the first twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) a taxpayer received from pensions, interest income, 401K plans and individual retirement accounts, and the first fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) for individuals filing a joint return. The qualifying

amount would be subtracted from the taxpayer's federal adjusted gross income in calculation of the taxpayer's personal income tax.

Line Item Veto

([S0382](#) *Sheehan, Judiciary*)

The RIFTHP opposes this proposed constitutional amendment, which if adopted, would give the governor a line-item veto.

Community Schools Initiative

([S0435](#) *Doyle, Senate Education*)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would require that the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education develop a strategic plan for creating a Rhode Island community school initiative.

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