
The SMITH HILL REPORT

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

May 15, 2017

RIC/AFT Advocates for Tuition Program

The local union representing Rhode Island College faculty has initiated a campaign to support Governor Raimondo's proposal for two years of tuition-free education at each of Rhode Island's public higher education institutions. The RI Promise program, proposed as [Article 3](#) of the State Budget, has garnered considerable attention this session. RIC/AFT President Quenby Hughes and RIC Associate Professor Tom Schmeling spoke at a rally in support of the program on Wednesday, May 10th. They noted that Rhode Island College was tuition free from its founding in 1854 until RIC began charging a \$25 fee in 1959. Now, Rhode Island is 46th among the states in its support of public higher education. Rhode Island students graduate with the second highest debt in the nation!

Some legislative leaders are considering a revised proposal that would restrict the Governor's tuition plan to CCRI. This would have a detrimental impact on Rhode Island College and would not benefit students seeking to attend a 4 year program.

RIC/AFT has initiated an electronic mail campaign to support Rhode Island College and the Governor's proposal. To add your voice to the supporters of RIC and the RI Promise program, use this link (actionnetwork.org/letters/rhodeislandpromisesupport) to email your Senator and Representative.

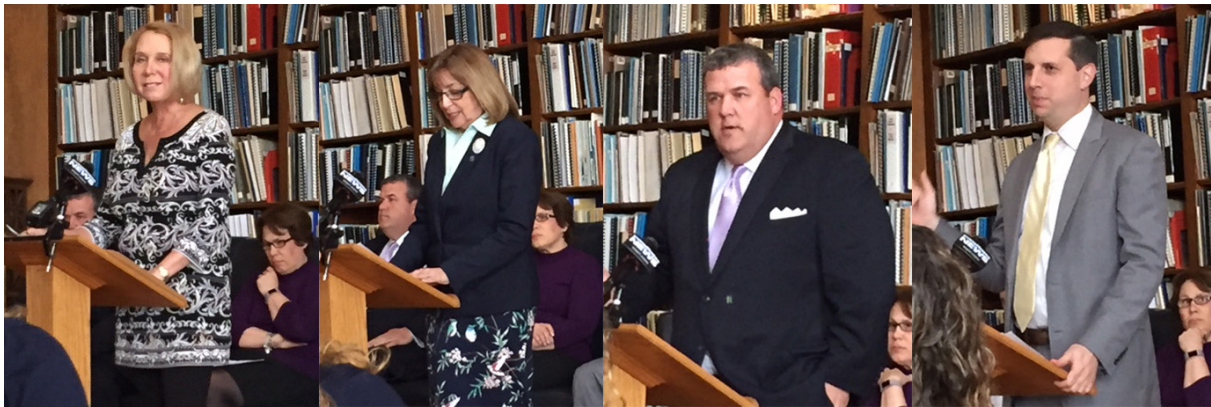
Fix Our Schools Now

The RIFTHP is a founding member of the Fix Our Schools Now coalition, a group formed to support increased investment to fix our public school buildings. The group held a legislative forum on Tuesday, May 9th in the Statehouse Library. The short speaking program consisted of Senator Hanna Gallo; Representatives Susan Donovan and Gregg Amore; General Treasurer Seth

Magaziner; School Nurse Teacher, Linda Mendonca; and Warwick Veterans Junior High School student, Kylie Powers.

Among the other elected officials attending the event were Representatives Ajello, Tanzi, Carson, Vella-Wilkinson, Marszalkowski, Kazarian, Winfield, Knight, Regunberg and Ranglin-Vassell.

The group is supporting specific legislation this year, and intends to work on a large statewide school construction bond next year. This coming June, RIDE will be releasing a comprehensive report on every Rhode Island public school building and the costs associated with fixing the schools. The costs to provide necessary repairs are expected to exceed \$1 billion.



(From Left to right: Senator Hanna Gallo, Representatives Susan Donovan and Gregg Amore, General Treasurer Seth Magaziner)

DSP Wage Increase Advocacy Continues

On Tuesday May 9th, the House Finance Committee heard testimony on [H5839](#) by Representative Tanzi. The resolution called for a wage increase for Direct Support Professionals, with a goal of reaching \$15.00/hour by 2020. RIFTHP Field Representative James Parisi offered written testimony ([click here](#)) in support of the legislation.

Senate Education Approves Post-Secondary Council Replacement

Governor Raimondo had appointed attorney Colonel Vivian Caruolo to replace Michael Bernstein to be on the Council of Post-Secondary Education. Colonel Vivian L. Caruolo, Esq. is a Deputy at the United States Property and Fiscal Office for Rhode Island, where she oversees daily operations. She previously served for 15 years as principle legal advisor to the Adjutant General of the Rhode Island National Guard, its subordinate commanders, the United States Property and

Fiscal Officer and more than 3,500 service members, as a Staff Judge Advocate. Caruolo earned her law degree and her bachelor's degree from Seton Hall University.

Several members of the Senate Education Committee raised objections to the Governor for appointing members without K-12 or higher education experience. The Senators had only complimentary things to say to the nominee, but repeated objections made last year that there were not enough practitioners on the Councils that oversee elementary and secondary education or higher education. Among those raising concerns were Senate Education Committee Chair Hanna Gallo, and Senators Satchell, Sheehan and Pearson. The Committee voted to give advice and consent to the nominee, with Senator Satchell voting against the motion.

Revenue Estimates Updated

Every year, the fiscal staff of the House, Senate and Governor's Office meet to determine the estimated revenue that they anticipate the State will obtain through taxes and fees next year. These estimates form the basis of adopting a state budget for the new fiscal year beginning July 1st. The three met for the final time on May 10th, when they adopted estimates that lowered expected tax revenue by \$100 million for this year and next year. They also adopted estimated expenses of \$15 million more than anticipated when the Governor proposed her budget in January. As the House and Senate leaders meet to begin work on a State Budget, there will be less money available to fund programs and services.

BILLS on the Move

The following bills have passed the Committee process and the full chamber of either the House or the Senate. To be enacted into law, the bill must pass the same process in the other chamber before being sent to the Governor for approval.

Media Literacy Policy

([S0106](#) *Satchell, House Health Education and Welfare*)

This bill would require the department of education to consider incorporating media literacy education in the basic education program.

Joint Committee of the Repealer

([S0281](#) *Lynch Prata, House Judiciary*)

This bill would create the Joint Committee of the Repealer to compile suggestions for repeal of statutes, regulations, and executive orders received from citizens, businesses, and government agencies, including, but not limited to, those that are not considered "business- friendly", and

those that are archaic and out of date. The committee would be in existence until December 31, 2023.

Civics Education Commission Membership

([S0633](#) Gallo, House Health Education and Welfare)

This bill would alter the membership, reporting protocol, and meeting requirements of the civic education commission.

School Safety Assessment – Report to General Assembly

([H5016](#) McNamara, Senate Education)

This bill would require the assessment to examine the status of each school building's safety be completed by November 1 of the year mandated. By December 31 of that year, a report to the General Assembly shall be made that such assessments have been completed.

Public Records Exemption – Public Higher Education Research

([H5098](#) Hagan McEntee, Senate Judiciary)

This bill would provide that preliminary drafts, notes, impressions, memoranda, working papers and work products including those involving research at state institutions of higher education on commercial, scientific, artistic, technical or scholarly issues, whether in electronic or other format, would not be deemed a public record for purposes of public access to public records.

Sunscreen Protection on School Grounds

([H5176](#) Bennett, Senate Education)

This bill would allow students in public schools to possess and use sunscreen.

Government Agency Information Sharing

([H5743](#) Casimiro, Senate Judiciary)

This bill would facilitate the sharing of information between the treasury, state retirement system, division of taxation, and the department of labor and training concerning unclaimed property, taxation collection, and pension benefit monitoring.

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