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# SMITH HILL REPORT



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## Session Opens

The 2019 session of the Rhode Island General Assembly opened on New Year's Day. Over the next two months, bills will be introduced and hearings on bills will begin in House and Senate committees. The Governor will give a State of the State address before a joint session of the House and Senate on Tuesday, January 15<sup>th</sup>. She is due to submit her proposed budget for the next Fiscal Year (FY 2020) on Thursday, January 17<sup>th</sup>. Shortly after the budget is introduced, hearings will be held on her spending proposals by the House Finance Committee and the Senate Finance Committee.

The RIFTHP will continue to publish the Smith Hill Report, a regular legislative newsletter highlighting important legislation and testimony, weekly. The newsletter is sent to local union leaders who then distribute it to union members. Those who would like to receive this newsletter directly from the RIFTHP may do so by signing up using the following link: [Sign-Up](#). We are also planning to provide occasional short video versions of the Smith Hill Report in our continued effort to keep members informed of our work on your behalf in the Rhode Island General Assembly.

## 2019 Assembly

The leadership of the House and Senate won re-election at the beginning of the session. Senate President Dominick Ruggerio, Senate Majority Leader Michael McCaffrey and Senate Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin all remain in place. The Senate Minority caucus will again be led by Senator Dennis Algieri. Committee chairs and committee memberships have not yet been established. The Senate Labor Committee position will be filled by a new person since former Chair Paul Fogarty did not run for re-election.

The House had 19 democrats abstaining rather than voting for Speaker Nicholas Mattiello, who won election with 47 votes. The rest of the House leadership was re-elected. Majority Leader Joseph Shekarchi and House Majority Whip Jay Edwards were re-elected. The House Minority Caucus will be led by Rep. Blake Filippi, who replaced former Minority Leader Patricia Morgan, who did not seek re-election due to her attempt to win

the Republican nomination for Governor. The House Judiciary chair position is vacant due to former Chair Cale Keable's loss in the November election.

The House will consider a package of revised rules next week, after the House Rules Committee recommended changes on January 10<sup>th</sup>. The revised rules require substantive revisions to bills, known as Substitute A versions of a bill, to be posted for 24 hours prior to being considered. The rules also create two new committees, The Committee on Special Legislation and the Committee on Conduct. The Committee on Conduct will be responsible for handling allegations of sexual harassment.

### **Representative elect Resigns**

Representative elect Laifton Ascencao, who was elected in November to represent the 68<sup>th</sup> district in Bristol/Warren, announced his resignation from the General Assembly on Monday, December 10<sup>th</sup>.

A special election will be held to fill the vacancy. If a primary election is necessary, it will be held on Tuesday, February 5<sup>th</sup>. The election will be held on Tuesday, March 5, 2019.

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