
The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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2020 Session Begins

The General Assembly convened in renovated House and Senate chambers on Tuesday January 7. The 2020 session will likely run through the end of June, passing bills and enacting a state budget for the July 2020-June 2021 fiscal year (FY 2021).

The 75-member House chamber was down one representative after Rep. Shelby Maldonado announced her resignation from her seat to take a new job in New York. Her District, District 56 is entirely within the city of Central Falls. A special election has been scheduled on March 3, 2020 to fill the vacancy. Only one candidate, Joshua Giraldo, has filed papers to run.

Smith Hill Report

The RIFTHP will continue to publish on a regular bi-weekly basis a written version of the Smith Hill Report. We will also publish regular short video updates, known as Smith Hill Snapshots. These efforts, along with increased use of our twitter account, will enable all RIFTHP members to follow the legislative activity of the RIFTHP.

State Budget Introduced

Governor Gina Raimondo used her January 14, 2020 State of the State address to highlight issues contained in her budget proposal. On Thursday, January 16, her budget bill was introduced in the House of Representatives ([H7171](#)). She also introduced a bill, known as the Supplemental Budget bill, to amend portions of the current (FY 2020) budget. One of her proposed changes to the current FY 2020 budget is a \$500,000 increase for Central Falls schools to accommodate an influx of students this school year. The RIFTHP will be lobbying in support of enhanced funding for Central Falls students.

The state budget contains both funding proposals as well as changes to state law in what are known as budget articles. The RIFTHP has an interest in many of the budget articles. Attached is a list of specific budget article issues we will be following this session.

Among the RIFTHP budget priorities are lobbying for education and higher education funding, supporting increased funding for English language learners, supporting increased pre-kindergarten opportunities, and supporting increased proposed wage reimbursement for Direct Support Professionals. We will lobby to increase staff positions at RIDE. We will lobby to increase funding for student assistance counselors who do drug and alcohol prevention work in schools as well as support state funding for the hiring of more mental health professionals in schools. We will advocate for state funding of teacher professional development and the expansion of community schools.

The Governor did not propose to extend the RI Promise program to Rhode Island College, though she has proposed to continue the program at CCRI by eliminating the sunset clause that the legislature enacted when the program was created. The RIFTHP will oppose efforts to eliminate the state's audiology program staffed by Local 2012 members. The RIFHP will support the bond questions that funds renovation of Rhode Island College URI and CCRI.

Follow Us

The RIFTHP has opened a new twitter account on legislative issues. If you are on twitter, follow us @RIFTHPL.

FY 2021 Budget

Article 1

- \$2.2 million (\$1m general revenue, \$1.2m federal) - DSP wage increase.

Article 2

- Higher Education and Industry Centers Construction Restricted Receipt Account.
- Rhode Island Nursing Center Restricted Receipt Account.

Article 3

- Forfeitures to fund substance abuse prevention programs under BHDDH.
- Line Item Veto ballot question, 2/3 budget vote required instead of 3/5.

Article 5

- \$117,000,000 Higher Education bonds, including \$38,000,000 for Rhode Island College Clarke Science Building Renovation.
- \$87,500,000 Housing and Infrastructure bonds, including \$15,000,000 Early Childhood Care and Education Capitol Fund.

Article 6

- \$250 DUI fee for substance abuse prevention.

Article 9

- Taxation of Nonprofit Property.

Article 10

- Include Pre-K students in Average Daily Membership in Funding Formula.
- Multi Language Learner Specifications
- School Resource Officer funding – Mental Health Professionals, SACs.
- Early Childhood Education facilities, expansion, regulation.
- School Building Authority Investments and Fees.
- Rhode Island Promise Continuation.
- Early Childhood Education Capitol Fund.
- Wavemaker Fellowship – Loan Forgiveness Program extended to STEM Teachers.

Article 15

- Substance Abuse Prevention Funding

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