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SMITH HILL REPORT



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

Assembly Opens 2014 Session

On Tuesday, January 7, 2014 the Rhode Island General Assembly convened at the State House to begin the new legislative session. The first few weeks of the session will be dedicated to getting bills drafted and introduced for consideration. In general, the deadline to get bills introduced in the House or Senate is mid-February. All committees will hold hearings on bills in the ensuing two months. Except for legislation related to finances, committees must act on bills by mid-April. Bills that pass a committee are then voted on by the full House or Senate. If the bill passes, it is then considered by the other chamber. Most legislation and the State Budget are not finalized until the Assembly finishes its business in June or early July.

The most important bill introduction is the proposed State Budget. Once Governor Chafee puts his budget plan together, the bill is drafted and introduced. The House Finance Committee will hold hearings on each department or agency of state government. In addition to line item budget appropriations, the budget bill will include legislative changes appended to the budget. These legislative changes, called budget articles, will also be heard and considered by the House Finance Committee before being acted on later this year.

Smith Hill Report Distribution

The RIFTHP publishes the Smith Hill Report regularly throughout the legislative session. The SHR is issued once a week. We began an all-electronic format last year. The SHR is sent to all AFT local union presidents who may then forward the SHR to members. If you are a RIFTHP member and wish to have the Smith Hill Report emailed directly to you, [click here](#).

Non-members may also sign up for electronic delivery of the SHR by [clicking here](#).

School Housing Aid Review

Last session the Rhode Island Senate established a Senate Study Commission to review school housing aid. School housing aid is state money to support school construction and renovation. The name reflects the state's investment in building school "houses" for Rhode Island students.

January 13, 2014

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Governor's
State of the State address
scheduled for
Wednesday, January 15

The Rhode Island General Assembly placed a misguided three year moratorium on school housing aid except for the remediation of health and safety issues. The three year moratorium is set to expire at the end of this fiscal year (June 30, 2014). The Senate is investigating the current status of school facilities and has established a Senate Task Force on School Housing Aid.

The Senate Task Force held its first meeting on Thursday January 9. At that meeting, the Department of Education gave a historical overview of school housing aid. You may view a Providence Journal article on that meeting by [clicking here](#). The second Task force meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 14.

The members of the Senate Task Force on School Housing Aid are:

Senator Ryan Pearson, Chair
Senator Harold Metts
Senator William Conley Jr.
Senator Adam Satchell
Senator Christopher Ottiano
Deborah Cylkie, Pawtucket Superintendent
Thomas Bruce, Woonsocket Finance Director
Nicholas Hemond, Providence School Board
Lisa Beaulieu, Cumberland School Committee

Senate/House Contacts

To view a list of all 38 Senate members, including mail, phone and e-mail contact information, [click here](#).

To view a list of all 75 House members, including mail, phone and e-mail contact information, [click here](#). Please note that the House roster still has the name of Representative Baldelli Hunt. She won election to be mayor of the City of Woonsocket and has resigned her legislative seat. A special election to fill her seat is scheduled for Tuesday, January 21, 2014. We will update the roster after the special election.

This contact information will also be posted at the RIFTHP website at www.RIFTHP.org/GAInfo.

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