

The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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

Budget Plan Emerges

The House Finance Committee passed a revised State Budget for the Fiscal Year 2015 (which starts July 1, 2014) minutes before midnight on June 5. The budget will be considered by the entire House of Representatives at a special meeting scheduled for [Thursday, June 12 at 2:00 PM](#). The RIFTHP worked on several issues within the State Budget and garnered some victories. Of most importance to RIFTHP members are the following:

Education Aid

The RIFTHP supported Governor Chafee's budget request that implemented the fourth year of the Education Funding Formula. That Formula would invest approximately \$39 million in additional education aid over last year's total. New charter schools and charter school expansion will cost taxpayers an additional \$5 million. Education Aid for each district will be reported next week after the final House vote.

Public Higher Education Funding

The Governor proposed increased funding to public higher education. The RIFTHP supported the increase of \$10 million, which was part of the FY 2015 budget supported by the House Finance Committee.

Pension Funding

The RIFTHP was successful in fending off two Chafee proposals that would have cut future pension funding. One proposal would eliminate the requirement that State Budget surpluses are put into the pension fund. The other proposal would eliminate the requirement that 5.5% of any state privatization contract be dedicated to pension funding. Both elements of

June 9, 2014

In This Issue

- Budget Plan Emerges
- Pension Litigation Costs

[Sign up here to receive the Smith Hill Report!](#)

[Senate Contacts](#)

[House Contacts](#)

[Senate/House Committee Assignments](#)



Article 12 were not included in the new State Budget approved by the Finance Committee.

Education Program Funding

Governor Chafee proposed eliminating state reimbursement to school districts for private school textbooks. He also proposed eliminating funding to school districts to offset administrative costs of school breakfast programs. The RIFTHP testified against both proposals which were deleted from the State Budget Plan.

Board of Education Reorganization

The RIFTHP supported the Governor's proposal to reorganize the Board of Education into a board comprised of two councils, a Higher Education Council and an Elementary and Secondary Council. The House Finance Committee supported the initiative with a revised plan. The Board of Education will grow to 17 members, eight on each council plus a Board of Education Chairperson who will serve on both councils. To view the proposal which is Article 20 of the State Budget, [click here](#).

Disappointments

The RIFTHP joined other advocates in getting additional state funding to programs serving the state's developmentally disabled. There was no increase this year. The RIFTHP had also testified against the three year moratorium on state reimbursement for school construction and renovation. The Finance Committee extended the moratorium through May, 2015.

Senator Adam Satchell discusses his legislation to enact a three year moratorium on using standardized tests as a graduation requirement.

LaborVision is seen on Cox Ch. 14 and FioS Ch. 33

Tuesdays @ 7PM

Thursday @ 8PM

Saturday @ 5PM

Pension Litigation Costs

On Tuesday, June 3, the RIFTHP supported legislation by Senator Ruggiero related to payment of pension litigation costs. The bill, [S2009](#), would limit the use of pension funds to pay litigation costs when the Retirement Board makes a decision that is being litigated. The Treasurer is utilizing pension funds reserved to use for administration of the pension plan to help pay for litigation costs of the current lawsuit.

RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi testified in support of the bill. He noted that using pension funding to pay for lawyers opposed to teachers and state workers

diminishes the pension fund. Pension funding is necessary to pay future benefits and to restore the cost of living adjustments frozen by the 2011 law.

Joining Parisi in testifying in support of the bill was Patrick Crowley of the NEA/RI and Jim Cenerini of Council 94. The League of Cities and Towns and the Association of School Committees raised objections to the bill.

[Connect with us on](#)



[Click here to unsubscribe](#)

© American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO. © 2011

This e-mail and any attachments are confidential and are intended solely for the named addressee(s). If you are not a named addressee, you should not copy, alter, post, forward, distribute or disseminate the contents of the e-mail or attachments. Any views or opinions expressed are solely those of the individual and do not necessarily represent those of American Federation of Teachers (AFT).