



The

SMITH HILL REPORT

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

Fair Funding Study Commission Convenes

Representative Jay O’Grady and Representative Gregg Amore are leading a study commission to review the education funding formula and whether or not the formula is fairly and equitably handling charter school funding. RIFTHP President Frank Flynn has been named to the twelve member commission. Also on the commission are representatives of the NEA/RI, Rhode Island Association of School Committees, League of Charter Schools, League of Cities and Towns, MET School, Rhode Island Mayoral Academies, RIDE, and the RI School Superintendents Association.

Chaired by Rep. O’Grady, the Commission will be meeting weekly at 3:00PM on Fridays to examine four topics. He announced the agenda at the initial meeting held on Thursday, January 15, 2015. They will begin with a review of how charter school funding impacts property taxes. Eight witnesses including school superintendents and council members are scheduled to testify at the Friday January 23 meeting. Their next hearing will focus on discerning obligations of the regular school district compared to charter schools such as out-of-district special education costs, transportation costs, private school textbooks, and other programs required of schools

The third area of inquiry will be to examine special education populations at charter schools and compare them to sending school districts. The final topic will be tuition costs paid by districts compared to spending needs of charter schools.

Chair O’Grady has developed an ambitious agenda with the hope of making findings that influence the state budget adopted this session. The hearings are televised on the statewide interconnect for those interested in following the commission activities.

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](#).

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Bill Introductions

Income Tax – Retirement Income Exemption

([H5000](#) Craven, House Finance)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would exempt retirement income from state personal income tax.

Income Tax – Retirement Income Exemption

([H5055](#) Giarrusso, House Finance)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would exempt retirement income from state personal income tax.

Income Tax – Retirement Income Exemption

([H5056](#) Morgan, House Finance)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would exempt retirement and social security income from state personal income tax.

Income Tax Credit – Student Loan Debt

([H5086](#) Blazejewski, House Finance)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would create the Stay Invested in RI Tax Credit authorizing a tax credit against state personal income tax for up to ten (10) years after graduation from an institution of higher education, for graduates who reside and work in Rhode Island.

Distribution of State Surplus

([H5140](#) Shekarchi, House Finance)

The RIFTHP opposes this act which would direct fifty percent (50%) of any state surplus to be distributed to the General Fund and the remaining fifty percent (50%) to the cities and towns in accordance with the State Aid Formula instead of placing the surplus into the retirement system.

Mayoral Charter School Approval Process

([H5160](#) Serpa, House Health, Education and Welfare)

([S0087](#) Satchell, Senate Education)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would provide that a mayoral academy charter school's application would not be approved by the Board of Education unless the school committee and the city or town council of each included municipality also supported the application.

Pension Litigation Costs

([H5169](#) Hull, House Finance)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would provide that any litigation costs paid from the restricted receipt account for the Retirement Board be limited to defending actions that arise as a result of decisions made by the Board.

DSP Rate Increase

([H5170](#) Hull, House Finance)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would require the Director of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals to adopt a state reimbursement system for community and nonprofit agencies that encourages the hiring and retention of competent individuals. This rate will be thirteen dollars and ninety-seven cents (\$13.97) per hour and will be adjusted annually.

Public Employee Card Check

([H5180](#) Blazejewski, House Labor)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would authorize the Labor Board to certify and recognize union representatives that submit authorization cards signed by seventy percent (70%) of its members. It would also empower the Board to investigate and prosecute coercion by union representatives.



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

Tuesday @ 7PM

Thursday @ 7PM

Saturday @ 5PM

This week on LaborVision we take a look at the Teamsters Local 251 Worker & Community Speakout for Good Jobs & Quality Care. Last Saturday more than 450 Hospital employees rallied with elected officials, clergy, labor leaders and public supporters to fight for a fair contract at Rhode Island Hospital.

There was a recent protest of at Gourmet Heaven on Weybosset Street in downtown Providence. Supporters, activists and former employees stormed Gourmet Heaven, an upscale deli, they say employees are owed more than \$100,000 in back wages, as is the case at Connecticut delis under the same ownership.

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](#).

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

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