



The SMITH HILL REPORT



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State Budget Introduced

On Thursday, March 12, 2015, Governor Raimondo introduced her proposed State Budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2016. The FY2016 budget contains a number of elements that the RIFTHP supports. She proposed the full funding of the education funding formula and identified money to increase state spending for school construction.

The State Budget proposal was formally introduced by the Chair of the House Finance Committee, Ray Gallison. In addition to monetary allocations for all state agencies and programs, his bill, [H5900](#) contains some specific changes in state law. Some of those items, called Budget Articles, included in the proposed budget important to RIFTHP members are:

Article 6 - Education

- Cease required public school payment for private school transportation
- Eliminates private school textbook loan program
- Requires Full-day Kindergarten by August 2016

Article 9 - School Construction and Renovation

- Creation of School Building Authority
- Operation remains within RIDE
- Creates a School Building Authority Capital Fund

Article 11 - Taxes

- Tax credit for social security benefits if a single filer under \$50,000 or a joint filer under \$60,000

Article 14 - State Budget

March 16, 2015

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- One year moratorium on paying state surplus into retirement fund

Article 20 – Licenses

- Elimination of RIDE Athletic Coach certificate

Article 22 – Personnel Reform

- Freeze longevity payments at June 30, 2015 level
- Longevity not included in base pay (no future COLA)
- Create additional unclassified managerial employees who are not in collective bargaining units
- Eliminate requirement that state employee medical benefits are substantially equivalent to benefits described in a CBA



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

Tuesday @ 7PM

Thursday @ 7PM

Saturday @ 5PM

Student Testing Time Report

On Wednesday, March 11, 2015, the House HEW Committee received testimony in support of legislation that would require each school district to create reports on the amount of testing they require students to take. The bill, [H5496](#) by Representative Tanzi, is not limited to state-required tests but also includes school district testing.

RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi testified that teachers are very focused on excessive testing required of students. He said we need better information on the required testing from school district to school district to get a better handle on how much time is already being dedicated to student testing in order to make necessary adjustments. The RIDE Deputy Commissioner testified on the bill noting that there is currently a RIDE review of student testing. He acknowledged that there is currently too much testing in public schools.

Student Discipline Review Urged

Legislation was introduced by Representative John Lombardi to require each school district to analyze its student discipline data to investigate potential disparate impact on students based on race, ethnicity or disability status and to describe action to remedy

any disparities. The bill, [H5383](#), would also limit out-of-school suspensions. A number of students organized in the Young Voices group came to testify, as did representatives of the NAACP and the ACLU.

James Parisi, RIFTHP lobbyist, offered several issues that needed to be remedied in the bill. While not objecting to a review of data, Parisi objected to the legislation empowering Superintendents to develop actions to remedy disparities without including public school teachers, staff and others in the schools. Any measures to change discipline must include teacher input, Parisi told the committee.

The RIFTHP also objected to the provision limiting out-of-school suspensions as being overly broad. As worded, it would only permit student suspensions if the student was deemed chronically disruptive. Finally, Parisi reminded the committee that maintaining a safe and orderly learning environment for students was essential and should not be diminished by any changes in discipline policy.

Bill Introductions

DD Contractors – Administrative Salary Disclosure

([S0301](#) Satchell, Senate Finance)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would require entities providing certain social services to the state to disclose the top ten highest paid administrators.

Higher Education Tuition – Immigration Status

([S0305](#) Pichardo, Senate Finance)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would create the "Student Equal Economic Opportunity Act" which would identify those students who are exempt from paying nonresident tuition at public universities, colleges or community colleges.

Charter School Housing Aid

([S0314](#) Doyle, Senate Finance)

The RIFTHP opposes this act which would increase the amount that charter public schools receive for state aid for reimbursement of school housing costs.

Adjunct Faculty Medical Insurance

([H5546](#) Jacquard, House Finance)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would provide that adjunct faculty members at any state college or university who teach at least fifty percent (50%) of the hours regularly worked by full-time faculty in an academic semester would be eligible for the same state hospital care and surgical-medical service benefit as other state employees.

Charter School Approval – Financial Consideration

([H5555](#) O'Grady, House Finance)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would require the board of education, prior to granting approval for either a new charter school or the

expansion of an existing charter school, to first make an affirmative finding that the proposed school or the proposed expansion would not have a detrimental effect on the finances and/or the academic performance of the sending districts affected by the new school or the expansion.

Teacher Survivor Benefit Increase

([H5561](#) *Amore, House Finance*)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would increase the monthly minimum benefits of spouses and domestic partners of retired teachers, and would authorize additional yearly non-compounded adjustments.

State Pension Contribution – Maintenance of Effort

([H5731](#) *Handy, House Finance*)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would require the yearly state contribution to the pension system not be reduced until the fund ratio meets or exceeds eighty percent (80%).

Curriculum - Music Education

([H5776](#) *Morin, House Finance*)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would mandate that public secondary schools, managed or controlled by the state, provide courses in musical performing arts as part of their curriculum effective July 1, 2015.

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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