
The SMITH HILL REPORT

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Recess

The Rhode Island General Assembly took the week off while schools were not in session. Once they return, the major focus will be on finishing departmental budget hearings. In early May, a Revenue Estimating Conference will determine expenses and revenue used to adopt a State Budget. Conventional wisdom is that there will be an early finish to the Assembly's work to permit candidates to run for office. For the next two months, the RIFTHP will be focused on:

- Requiring local approval of new charter schools
- Defeat Governor Raimondo's Empowerment School proposal
- Support Article 11 changes to charter school and ELL funding
- Support the proposed funding of a DSP rate increase

Rhode Island Presidential Primary

Rhode Island's Presidential Primary is **Tuesday, April 26**. On April 26, voters will be able to pick a presidential candidate and elect convention delegates for their chosen candidate. Running to be convention delegates pledged to support Hillary Clinton are four AFT members.

RIFTHP members living in Congressional District 1 will be able to vote for Hillary Clinton delegates:

Fred Hoppe, President of the Lincoln Teachers' Association, and
Colleen Callahan, RIFTHP Director of Professional Issues.

RIFTHP members living in Congressional District 2 will be able to vote for Hillary Clinton delegates:

Lizbeth Larkin, President of the Cranston Teachers' Alliance, and
James Parisi, RIFTHP Field Representative and Lobbyist.

Bill Introductions

Cessation of Unfunded Mandates

([H7177](#) *Edwards, House Finance*)

This act would provide that if during any fiscal year the state reimbursement to cities, towns and school districts is insufficient to cover the costs of state mandates as reported by the Department of Revenue, those affected cities, towns, and school districts may cease implementation of state mandates at their discretion, in an amount not greater than fifty percent (50%) of the value of the reimbursement shortfall.

School Building Authority – Voter Approval

([H7551](#) *DeSimone, House Finance*)

This act would permit cities and towns to borrow any amount from the School Building Authority Capital Fund to fund the LEA's share of total project costs without voter approval prior to July 1, 2016. After July 1, 2016, voter approval would be required for loans in excess of \$500,000.

Post-Retirement Employment – Substitute Teaching

([S2282](#) *Nesselbush, Senate Finance*)

This act would allow retired members of the state retirement system who are certified as substitute teachers to substitute teach not more than ninety (90) days a year without reduction in retirement benefits.

State Employee Retirement – Direct Contribution Eligibility

([S2454](#) *Gallo, Senate Finance*)

This act would remove state employees who were eligible to retire on June 30, 2012 from inclusion in the defined contribution retirement plan and returns them to the traditional defined

benefit plan. The act would increase the employee's contribution from three and three quarters percent (3.75%) to eleven percent (11%) of compensation. The employees would receive an additional one percent (1%) per year of retirement allowance.

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