
The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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Charter Moratorium Hearing Re-Scheduled

The Senate Education Committee postponed the scheduled charter school moratorium bill hearing from Wednesday, January 20th to Wednesday, January 27th. The Senate is holding the hearing virtually, and those who want to participate should view the Committee hearing notice ([here](#)).

The top legislative priority of the RIFTHP this session is to get approval of a moratorium on charter school expansion that stops the 6 proposals approved by the Commissioner and the K-12 Council in December. The legislation would impose a three-year moratorium on new charter schools, charter school expansion, and the funding of additional charter school expansion. The bill, [S0013](#), is sponsored by Senator Maryellen Goodwin.

Special Election Set for March 2, 2021

A series of seven state bond issues totaling \$400 million in investment in our infrastructure will go before voters in a special election to be held on March 2nd. A priority issue for the RIFTHP is Question 1, the higher education bond. That bond includes \$38 million for the renovation of the Clarke Science Building on the Rhode Island College Campus. Funding for URI and CCRI infrastructure is also included in Question 1. Another noteworthy bond is Question 5 which provides for \$15 million for licensed early childhood education facilities.

The Secretary of State recently sent mail ballot applications to all registered voters. Individuals who want to vote by mail may do so by filling out the form and returning it in the self-addressed stamped envelope. Voters will have three options to cast their ballot including: by mail, early in-person up to 20 days before the election, or at the polls on Election Day. The Voter Information Handbook from the Secretary of State's office will outline the bond questions in detail, as well as voting procedures in Rhode Island.

Please keep in mind the following dates:

- Sunday, January 31st: Deadline to register to vote

- Tuesday, February 9th: Deadline to submit mail ballot applications
- Wednesday, February 10th: Early in-person voting period begins
- Monday, March 1st: Early in-person voting period ends at 4 p.m.
- Tuesday, March 2nd: Special Referenda Election, polls open

Visit <https://vote.sos.ri.gov/Candidates/CandidateCalendar> for more information.

Bill Introductions

Computer Science Curriculum Standards

([H5018](#) Lombardi, House Health, Education and Welfare)

This bill directs the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education to develop recommendations for a high school curriculum to prepare students for successful postsecondary education and careers in computer science.

Teacher Early Retirement Eligibility

([H5026](#) McNamara, House Health, Education and Welfare)

This bill allows teachers, who are at the top step of the salary scale, to retire early by permitting them to work half-time while receiving full pension credit. The early retirement would be contingent on the district increasing its pension contribution to offset the reduction in salary. The bill would provide this option to teachers who are within 2 – 8 years of normal retirement age.

School Accountability System – Surveyworks Data

([H5027](#) McNamara, House Health, Education and Welfare)

This bill incorporates SurveyWorks school climate indicators in reports used for evaluating the performance of LEAs and individual public schools.

Civics Education Requirement

([H5028](#) Newberry, House Health, Education and Welfare)

This bill requires the implementation of the civic literacy act for all students between the 8th and 12th grades including creation of a civics requirement for graduation.

Healthcare Workers Hazard Pay – State of Emergency

([H5029](#) Morales, House, Labor)

This bill provides that employers pay essential health care facility employees at a rate of one hundred fifty percent (150%) of their regular pay during a declared public health emergency.

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