

*The*

# SMITH HILL REPORT



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## Statewide Teacher Contract Study Commission

At the end of last session, Senate President Teresa Paiva-Weed introduced legislation ( [2015 S1027](#)) to create a Senate Study Commission to review the possibility of a statewide teacher contract. RIFTHP President Frank Flynn and RIFTHP Field Representative and Lobbyist James Parisi serve on the Commission. At the next Commission meeting scheduled for Wednesday, March 9<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 PM, there will be a presentation by a consultant hired by the Rhode Island Foundation.

## Rhode Works Toll Bill Passes

The House and Senate passed the RhodeWorks bill last week and the bill was immediately signed by the Governor. This legislation places gantries at various locations throughout the state to toll large commercial trucks. The bill requires a vote by the people before tolls could be extended to automobiles.

Opposing the bill would necessitate finding other means to fund needed work to fix Rhode Island's roads and bridges, rated the worst in the country. Said RIFTHP President Frank Flynn, "All of our members should support this effort because the alternative to tolling trucks would likely be cuts to education aid, higher education, and funding for developmental disabilities providers".

## Bill Introductions

### **Adjunct Faculty Medical Insurance**

([H7379](#) *Jacquard, House Finance*)

( [S2097](#) *Miller, Senate Health and Human Services*)

The RIFTHP supports these acts 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 medical insurance benefit as other state employees.

### **Preschool Pilot Program**

[\(H7426\)](#) *McNamara, House Health, Education and Welfare*

The RIFTHP supports this act which would authorize the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop a research-based model full-time preschool pilot program for children age three (3) years of age and under that would focus on low income families and children that are English language learners. The purpose of this program would be to eliminate the education achievement gap that currently exists for this population upon entering kindergarten.

### **Contract Continuation – Teachers / Municipal Workers**

[\(H7466\)](#) *Carnevale, House Labor*

The RIFTHP supports this act which would require that all contractual provisions contained in an expired collective bargaining agreement with certified school teachers and municipal employees continue until a successor agreement has been reached by the parties.

### **School Social Worker Data Collection**

[\(H7519\)](#) *Kazarian, House Health, Education and Welfare*

The RIFTHP supports this act which would create a process for the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to collect and organize information concerning the workload and scope of the duties and responsibility performed by school social workers.

### **DSP Minimum Wage \$13.97**

[\(H7553\)](#) *Hull, House Finance*

The RIFTHP supports this act which would mandate that health employees working for state operated community and residential facilities receive a minimum of \$13.97 per hour and that such rate would be adjusted annually every April 1 by a percentage increase to the nearest cent using the Consumer Price Index for Urban wage earners and clerical workers.

### **Charter School Approval - Local Control**

[\(S2019\)](#) *Stachell, Senate Education*

The RIFTHP supports this act which would provide that the creation of a new charter public school or the expansion of an existing charter public school would require approval from the city or town council of each sending school district. Any charter public school seeking to expand up to and including its maximum capacity as set forth in the school's original application which had been approved prior to the effective date of this act would not be limited or prohibited. This act also does not prohibit any expansion of an existing charter public school which expansion was already completely approved by the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education or its predecessor prior to the effective date of this act.

### **DSP Rate Reimbursement Increase**

[\(S2191\)](#) *DiPalma, Senate Finance*

The RIFTHP supports this act which would require the Director of the Department of Behavioral

Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals to adopt a state reimbursement system for community and nonprofit agencies, and increase the reimbursement rate for direct support professionals employed by private developmental disability organizations to increase to \$13.97 per hour.

### **Income Tax Credit – Retirement Income**

[\(S2195\)](#) *Fogarty, Senate Finance*

The RIFTHP supports this act which would exempt from personal income tax the first twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) a taxpayer received from pensions, interest income, 401K plans and individual retirement accounts. The qualifying amount would be subtracted from the taxpayer's federal adjusted gross income in calculation of the taxpayer's personal income tax.



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