
The SMITH HILL REPORT

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

April 29, 2016

Firearms in Schools

The Senate Judiciary Committee heard a number of bills related to guns on Tuesday, April 26th. One of the bills, [S2761](#), would prevent those with a conceal and carry permit from possessing their weapon on school grounds. RIFTHP President Frank Flynn provided written testimony in support of the bill. The bill excludes police officers from the ban, as does the House bill heard a month ago. To view the letter President Flynn sent to the Committee, [click here](#).

Direct Support Professional Wage Increase

On Tuesday, April 26th, RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi spoke in support of the portion of the Governor Raimondo budget request that would provide \$5.1 million funding to support wage increases for Direct Support Professionals (DSP) who work with the state's developmentally disabled population. Parisi noted how the wage increases bargained at Trudeau have not kept pace with the recent increases in the state's minimum wage. He also reported that recruitment and retention of qualified staff have suffered because of the poverty wages offered to those working in these important jobs. The hearing was conducted when the Senate Finance Committee considered the budget of the Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH).

Pension Income Tax Exemption

RIAFT/R President Roger Boudreau provided testimony in support of income tax legislation before the Senate Finance Committee on Thursday, April 28th. The bill, [S2451](#) by Senator Lombardi, would exempt government pensions from Rhode Island income tax. The bill adopts the

same income thresholds that the Assembly adopted when they provided a tax break for social security income for tax filers under \$80,000 for individuals and \$100,000 for those filing joint returns.

Roger Boudreau and others testified that after the significant pension reductions adopted by the Assembly in 2011, the Assembly could mitigate those reductions by providing an income tax break for all government pensions. He and others argued that this is even more important because half of the state's teachers did not participate in social security and missed out on last year's tax break for certain retirees.

Also testifying in support of the bill were Mary Jo Poulliot, an NEA/RI retiree, and Jim Cenerini representing AFSCME Council 94. A similar bill will be heard in the House Finance Committee on May 5th.

Bills on the Move

The following bills were passed by the Senate and have now been transferred to their respective House Committees to be heard:

Joint Committee of the Repealer

[\(S2224\)](#) *Lynch, House Judiciary*

This act would create the Joint Committee of the Repealer for a term of six (6) years to compile suggestions for repeal of statutes, regulations, and executive orders received from citizens, businesses, and government agencies, including, but not limited to, those that are not considered "business-friendly", and those that are archaic and out of date.

License Plates – Private Higher Education

[\(S2241\)](#) *Felag, House Finance*

This act would authorize the Division of Motor Vehicles to create special registration plates for private colleges and universities within the state.

License Plates – Public Higher Education Institutions

[\(S2480\)](#) *Jabour, House Finance*

This act would authorize the Division of Motor Vehicles to create a special registration plate for state public colleges and universities.

School Healthy Foods

([S2757](#) Sosnowski, House Health, Education and Welfare)

This act would modify the types of healthy foods and beverages that could be sold to students in schools during the school day by referencing the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. Career and technical schools with culinary arts or food service programs would be permitted to request an exemption that would allow the sale of non-compliant snacks and beverages to students in school if such food was prepared by culinary students as part of their curriculum. The act would also repeal the current definitions of healthier beverages and snacks.

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