February 21, 2017

A Slow Week, Then A Week Off

There were several bill hearings in the Rhode Island General Assembly last week, but none of the bills heard in various committees were bills that the RIFTHP testified on. The Assembly is in recess during the February school vacation week. There are no hearings this week. The House and Senate reconvene on Tuesday, February 28th.

Fix Our Schools Now

The RIFTHP helped organize a new coalition dedicated to advocating for increased State support to renovate dilapidated public schools as well as build new ones. The coalition, called Fix our Schools Now, a Coalition for Healthy School Environments, is hosting a forum on Monday, February 27th at 4:00 PM at the Providence Career and Technical Academy. The public is invited and teachers are encouraged to attend. To view the forum announcement, click here.

Trump Labor Nominee Withdraws

President Donald Trump nominated a wealthy corporate boss of a fast food chain to be the Labor Department Secretary. Andrew Puzder had a history of opposing minimum wage increases and other labor rights. His nomination was fiercely opposed by unions and other advocates of working Americans. Facing a likely defeat when at least four Senate Republicans announced intentions to oppose the nomination, Puzder withdrew from the race.

AFT President Randi Weingarten released the following statement following Puzder's nomination:

"America's workers won today because senators required real transparency from Andrew Puzder, and advocates for workers resisted and persisted. Puzder's conflicts of interest and his troubling record of shipping jobs overseas, labor violations, automation, and his opposition to a living wage for low-wage workers like those at the fast-food restaurants his company owns posed a grave threat to working people. And a last-minute push by the business lobby backfired, reaffirming his hostility toward workers.

"The fact that Donald Trump would even nominate someone so hostile to workers continues a troubling trend by this new administration of putting the interests of big corporations ahead of the needs of working families. America's labor secretary is charged with protecting America's workers. If President Trump is serious about fulfilling his campaign promise to create jobs and help working people, then he needs to use this opportunity to nominate a labor secretary committed to workers' interests, not corporate interests."

Bill Introductions

State Employee Non-member Grievance Representation

([H5231](#) *Hagan McEntee, House Labor*)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would relieve state employee unions of their obligation to represent an employee, in the grievance process, if that employee has elected not to maintain union membership for at least ninety (90) days prior to the events giving rise to the grievance event. It would also give the union a right to participate in the grievance process for an employee that is not entitled to union representation.

Municipal Employee Non-member Grievance Representation

([H5232](#) *Hagan McEntee, House Labor*)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would relieve municipal employees' unions of their obligation to represent an employee, in grievance process, if that employee has elected not to maintain union membership for at least ninety (90) days prior to the events giving rise to the grievance event. It would also give the union a right to participate in the grievance process for an employee that is not entitled to union representation.

Higher Education Tuition Equity

([H5237](#) *Diaz, House 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 Analysis – Auditor General

([H5239](#) *O'Grady, House Finance*)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would provide that the Office of Auditor General be responsible for analyzing and reporting the impact of new or expanded charter.

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