



# SMITH HILL REPORT

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## **Tough Times Before Us**

The 2008 session of the Rhode Island General Assembly will be especially challenging for the RIFTHP. Every year there are bills that seek to limit rights and benefits of our members. This year is different because the attacks are more numerous, more serious and have the support of some legislative leaders.

Speaker Murphy has introduced a bill to create a House study commission on teacher and state worker pensions. He has already spoken about new hires being placed in a defined contribution pension plan. Finance Committee leaders have made public comments about cutting or level-funding school aid. State funding of higher education, already at one of the lowest rates in the country, remains a non-priority for state officials. The Board of Regents is considering legislation to penalize striking teachers and to restrict our ability to negotiate issues such as transfers and evaluations. The Commissioner of Education is seeking to strengthen his authority when intervening in low performing school districts. A number of politicians want to force teachers into the State medical insurance plan.

The Smith Hill Report will be published regularly throughout the session to give you basic information about bill introductions and testimony on important legislation. The first two issues sent to you included contact information for all Rhode Island Senators and Representatives.

We will have to increase our level of activism to survive these tough times and protect our rights and benefits. If you have any questions or concerns, contact RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi at 273-9800 or at [rifjim@aol.com](mailto:rifjim@aol.com).

## **Bill Introductions - House Bills**

- **Binding Arbitration - Last Best Offer**  
(H7013 Gemma, House Labor)  
The RIFTHP opposes this act which would expand the scope of the binding arbitration process to include monetary issues for teachers and non-teacher educational employees. It would maintain working conditions for teachers working under an expired contract.
- **Glucagon Administration**  
(H7014 Gemma, House Health, Education, & Welfare)  
The RIFTHP opposes this act which would require school departments to develop policies and procedures for administering injections to diabetic students in the event of an emergency by non-medical school employees. The policy would require parent authorization and the training of school personnel.
- **Privatization of State Services - Standards, Appeals**  
(H7055 Gablinske, House Finance)  
The RIFTHP opposes this act which would weaken the appeal provision of the privatization of state services act which passed last session.
- **Prohibit Bargaining Specific Insurer or Provider**  
(H7108 Schadone, House Labor)  
The RIFTHP opposes this act which would prohibit any municipal employee, municipal police, municipal firefighter, municipal teacher, state police, 911 commission employee and correctional officer, collective bargaining agreement or arbitration award from containing language which specifically identifies a specific medical, dental or optometric medical insurance company.

# 2008 House Committee Assignments

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