



SMITH HILL REPORT

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Members Turn Out To Protect Rights

RIFTHP members from four local unions arrived at the State House on Tuesday, March 10th, to object to a series of anti-worker bills being heard in the House Labor Committee. The hearing extended into the night as members forcefully defended collective bargaining against a direct attack orchestrated by several House members.

- **H5300 - Scope of Bargaining Limitations** (*Gablinski*)

The RIFTHP **opposes** this act which would restrict collective bargaining by municipal employees, including teachers, to matters concerning compensation and benefits. **Linda Cohen** (Coventry), **Christina Keiser** and **Ron Beaupre** (Pawtucket) each testified against the bill.

- **H5379 - Scope of Bargaining – Bumping** (*Gablinski*)

The RIFTHP **opposes** this act which prohibit bumping during the layoff of teachers and the order of layoffs would be determined by the school principal based on a merit system. **Ron Beaupre** (Pawtucket), **Michaela Wells** and **Joe Fagnoli** (Coventry) each testified against the bill.

- **H5380 - Agency Fee Prohibition** (*Gablinski*)

The RIFTHP **opposes** this act which would allow employees who elect not to join a labor union to not be required to pay a service

Pension Study Commission Votes on Major Changes

On Thursday, March 12, the House Special Commission to Review All Aspects of the State Pension and Retirement System voted to recommend significant pension cuts for vested members, non-vested members and future hires. Once the report is issued later this month, legislation to implement the changes is anticipated to be introduced and referred to the House Finance Committee for deliberations. More details will be published once the report is formalized.

The Commission rejected a union-backed motion to hold vested employees harmless of any changes. The Commission did decide to not affect the pensions of teachers and state workers now eligible to retire.

The Commission voted to:

- Change the compounded pension COLA to a simple COLA
- Create a reduced “hybrid” plan for future hires
- Impose a minimum retirement age of 65 for Schedule A and Schedule B
- Make all purchases of service credit at full actuarial value
- Reduce certain job related disability benefits

charge in lieu of union dues.

John Maguire (N. Providence) testified against the bill.

- **H5435 - Elimination of Public Sector Collective Bargaining** (*Trillo*)

The RIFTHP **opposes** this act which would prohibit any future collective bargaining agreements with any public employees. **Richard DiPardo** (Woonsocket), **Marc Blevins** and **Mary Vandervelde** (Coventry) each testified against the bill.

- **H5437 - Council Ratification of School Contracts** (*Trillo*)

The RIFTHP **opposes** this act which would require that if a city or town charter or ordinance empowers a city or town council to ratify the collective bargaining agreements of its school committees, then no collective bargaining agreement is effective unless ratified by the city or town council. **John Maguire** (N. Providence) testified against the bill.

Bill Introductions **House Bills**

- **Collective Bargaining Fiscal Impact Statements**

(H5817 *Watson, House Labor*)

The RIFTHP **opposes** this act which would require that collective bargaining fiscal impact statements be publicized on the city or town website for thirty (30) days prior to ratification.

- **Scope of Bargaining – Waiver Payments, Spouse Coverage**

(H5820 *Gablinske, House Labor*)

The RIFTHP **opposes** this act which would prevent payment to public employees for a waiver of health insurance coverage and would require spouses and domestic partners of public employees to obtain health insurance from the spouse's or domestic partner's employer.

- **State Budget Reductions**

(H5840 *Ehrhardt, House Finance*)

The RIFTHP **opposes** this act which would give the Governor authority to reduce or suspend appropriations in response to budget shortfalls.

- **Caruolo Action Elimination**

(H5844 *Kilmartin, House Finance*)

The RIFTHP **opposes** this act which would repeal those provisions of Section 16-2-21.4 which permits a school committee to seek additional appropriations by bringing an action in Superior Court seeking more funding from the appropriating authority.

- **Faculty and College Excellence Act**

(H5850 *Wasylyk, House Health, Education and Welfare*)

The RIFTHP **supports** this act which would require that 75% of all classes taught at each

public institution of higher education by 2015 be taught by full-time, tenured or tenure-track faculty. Academic departments with less than 8 (eight) full-time equivalent faculty positions would be exempt.

- **RI Certification Standards Board**

(H5855 *Lima, House Health, Education and Welfare*)

The RIFTHP **supports** this act which would amend the composition and the duties of the Rhode Island Certification Standards Board. It would remove the status of advisory from the Policy Advisory Board on Teacher and Administrator Certification to the Policy Board on Teacher and Administrator Certification.

- **Demotion and Discharge of Teachers**

(H5878 *Fox, House Labor*)

The RIFTHP **opposes** this act which would amend certain provisions relative to teachers' rights and duties including dismissal and demotion to diminish the role of seniority in layoff decisions. The bill also reduces teacher rights under the State's Tenure Law.

- **Scope of Bargaining – Tuition Waivers**

(H5925 *Baldelli-Hunt, House Health, Education and Welfare*)

The RIFTHP **opposes** this act which would eliminate the granting of tuition waivers for State institutions of higher education to non-teaching State employees, their spouses and dependents, where such waivers are given on the basis of such employment with the State. This act would allow waivers to be given to full-time teaching employees.

Senate Bills

- **Municipal Employee – Schedule B Pensions**

(S0502 *Blais, Senate Finance*)

The RIFTHP **opposes** this act which would make sweeping revisions to the law on retirement qualification for municipal employees, creating a second tier pension benefit for those with less than ten years of service.

- **Mediation Fees – Municipal Employees**

(S0625 *Ruggerio, Senate Finance*)

The RIFTHP **supports** this act which require the State to pay the cost of compulsory mediation involving municipal employees.