



# SMITH HILL REPORT

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[www.rifthp.org](http://www.rifthp.org)

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## **Last Chance to Act!**

The House Finance Committee is poised to enact pension cuts to **vested and non-vested** teachers and state workers early next week. As published in the past issue of the Smith Hill Report, the legislators are considering phasing in a significant increase in the age one must be in order to retire. Legislative leaders are also still considering cutting the pension COLA and imposing lesser pension benefits for Schedule A members.

**Time is of the essence.** Every teacher and state worker must contact their Senator and Representative in the next few days before permanent pension cuts are voted on. In order to get phone numbers and e-mail addresses for your Senator and Representative, go to [www.rifthp.org](http://www.rifthp.org) and click on the "RI House Contacts" or "RI Senate Contacts" links on the left. If you need to find out who your legislators are, you can go to the Rhode Island Voter Information Center at <http://www.sec.state.ri.us/vic/>. **Phone and e-mail your Senator and Representative today** telling them:

### ❖ **Re-amortize The Unfunded Pension Liability**

The State could save over fifty million dollars (\$50,000,000) a year by re-amortizing the unfunded pension liability. This is similar to refinancing one's home mortgage. The State is in the eighth year of a thirty-year repayment plan and could lower its costs by re-amortization in order to avoid benefit cuts.

### ❖ **Keep the COLA**

Public employees should not be placed in a position that is simply a race to the bottom. Without a meaningful cost-of-living adjustment, our pension will never allow us to maintain a respectable standard of living in the future.

### ❖ **Keep the Promise**

Teachers and state workers have made life plans based on the retirement system that we fund with contributions from every paycheck. To unilaterally change our age to retire to 62 or 65 is simply not fair.

## **Senate Approves Continuing Contract Bill**

On Thursday, June 11, the Rhode Island Senate voted 32-2 in support of **S713** by **Senator Perry** to ensure that teacher contracts continue upon expiration until a new agreement is negotiated. The only two Senators to vote **against** the bill were freshmen **Senator Michael Pinga** (D – West Warwick) and freshman **Senator Frank Maher** (R – Charlestown, Exeter, Hopkinton, Richmond, West Greenwich). Senators Ciccone, Devall, Perry, Ruggerio, Sheehan and Tassoni all spoke on the floor in support of the legislation. The bill now moves to the House of Representatives, where an identical bill (**H5762**) sponsored by **Peter Palumbo** has been stalled in the House Labor Committee.

# Members Go To Capitol Hill

The RIFTHP scheduled several “Face-to-Face” meetings with legislators and their constituents, who are RIFTHP members, to talk about the problems facing the State and municipalities and about solutions being offered to address them.

Dozens of members from many of the local unions and the retiree chapter have met with their Representatives and Senators.

The following is a list of the meetings since last reported:

## **Senator Michael McCaffrey**

Jeanne Petit (Warwick)  
Jamie Schoeninger (Warwick)  
Eleanor Hull (Warwick)  
Dawn Manchester (Warwick)  
Jessica Parkhurst (Central Falls)

## **Representative Donald Lally**

Lorraine Fusco (Pawtucket)  
Marc Blevins (Coventry)  
Janice Santos (Retirees)

## **Representative Pat Serpa**

Don Vanasse (West Warwick)  
Frank Flynn (Cranston)  
John Wilkicki (Warwick)  
Debbie Johnson (Warwick)  
Justine Sherburne (Warwick)  
Bob Zambuco (West Warwick)  
Marcy Zambuco (West Warwick)

## **Representative Eileen Naughton**

Jeanne Petit (Warwick)  
Jamie Schoeninger (Warwick)  
Dawn Manchester (Warwick)

## **Senator Ed O’Neill**

Rod DaSilva (Cranston)  
Noel Chartier (Central Falls)  
Mary Ann McComiskey (Lincoln)  
Alice Brady (North Providence)  
Bernadette Azar (West Warwick)  
Diane DiPrete (Providence)

## **Representative Ken Carter**

Ken Bowling (Cranston)  
Steve Lukowicz (Coventry)  
Judith Packham (West Warwick)  
Alan Hurst (Cranston)

## Bill Introductions

- **Education Funding Formula**  
(**S921 Gallo, Senate Finance**)  
(**H6227 Corvese, House Finance**)  
These acts would establish a permanent education funding aid formula for calculating State aid to public education. The RIFTHP is in a coalition with other organizations that support these bills.
- **Education Funding Formula**  
(**H5978 Ajello, House Finance**)  
This act would establish a new system for the support of public education in Rhode Island, based upon an objective assessment of student needs and designed to assure predictability and accountability in the funding and delivery of meaningful educational opportunity to all students in all communities throughout the State.
- **Retirement Benefits – Workers Compensation Offset**  
(**S343 McCaffrey, Senate Labor**)  
This act would amend the formula under which there is an offset of amounts received from workers’ compensation as damages on account of death or disability of a member of the State Retirement System for the period of time prior to the receipt of retirement benefits.
- **Definition of School Improvement Performance Goals**  
(**S862 DiPalma, Senate Education**)  
This act would amend the performance goal standards under this section from standards set by the districts’ strategic plans to standards established by the Board of Regents or State and federal law.
- **Contract Restrictions – State Officer or Employee**  
(**S412 Pinga, Senate Finance**)  
This act would make it a violation for any employee or officer to make an expenditure in excess of an appropriation, or to obligate the State to a contract or an expenditure, prior to an appropriation authorized by a legally-constituted authority.
- **Board of Governors Non-Classified Status**  
(**S354 Gallo, Senate Finance**)  
This act would remove employees of the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education and employees of State colleges and universities from the control of the personnel administrator and/or the merit system law.