



SMITH HILL REPORT

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Carcieri Vetoes Teacher Insurance Bill

For the past five months, the RIFTHP, the NEA/RI, RIDE, the Governor's **Department of Administration**, the **School Committees Association** and a host of other interested parties have worked diligently to craft legislation that would change the system of obtaining medical insurance for classroom teachers. Despite his designee's active participation in reaching compromises, Governor Carcieri **vetoed** the legislation on July 9.

Initially, the bills introduced by **Senator Gallo, S 777**, **Representative McNamara, H 5613**, focused solely on teachers. At the urging of RIDE, the scope of the bill was to create a system of purchasing medical insurance for all school employees. The RIFTHP helped initiate the legislation and supported subsequent revisions to the bills. The legislation and veto messages are available at <http://www.rifthp.org/CarcieriVeto> .

The amended bills would create a statewide labor-management committee, referred to as the Board of Trustees, comprised of twelve individuals. The 6 labor appointees would represent the RIFTHP (2), the NEA/RI (2) the Laborers (1) and AFSCME Council 94 (1). The 6 management appointees would represent the RI Association of School Committees (2), the RI Association of School Business Managers (2), and the RI School Superintendents' Association (2).

The group would be assisted by a technical advisory committee that would include representatives of RIDE, the State Department of Administration, existing purchasing collaboratives and the League of Charter Schools.

The Board, with the assistance of the technical advisory committee, would be charged to develop a limited number of plan designs that would then be offered to school employees throughout the State. Plan designs currently in place in collective bargaining agreements would not be impacted by the bills. The bills specified that the amount of premium cost-sharing, the amount of payment for waiving medical insurance, and provisions for retiree medical benefits would still be bargained at the local level.

Governor Carcieri vetoed the legislation because it did not create a minimum employee cost-share in statute. He also objected to the Board of Trustees which included management representatives who are administrative school employees whose benefits plans would be designed by the Board.

The General Assembly may override the veto when they return to work later this month.

Bills on the Move

The following bills have passed the House and Senate and have been transmitted or are awaiting transmittal to the Governor:

- **School Building Fire Code Extension**
(**H5166** *Mattiello*)
This act would extend fire code compliance for public school buildings to no earlier than January 1, 2011.
- **Woonsocket Student Dress Code**
(**S0020** *Picard*)
This act would give authority to the school board for Woonsocket to establish a dress code for elementary, middle and high school students.
- **Universal Voluntary Retirement Accounts**
(**S0453** *Walaska*)
This resolution would create an eight (8) member special legislative commission whose purpose it would be to make a comprehensive study of the establishment of Universal Voluntary Retirement Accounts, and who would report back to the General Assembly no later than January 14, 2010 and whose life would expire on March 14, 2010. Sent to the Governor on July 8 for his signature or veto.

Passed Bills

- **Center for Health Professions**
(**H5393** Slater - **S0049** Pichardo)
This act would create a center for health professionals for the development of a healthcare workforce.
- **Resolution – Federal Stimulus Funds – Nurse Education**
(**S0717** *Doyle*)
The Rhode Island General Assembly supports a comprehensive federal stimulus package that stimulates all segments of the State's economy and that includes funding to rehabilitate, expand, and improve the current instructional capacity within our State schools of nursing and encourages the continued financial support of our State schools of nursing to grow the capacity and quality of critical nursing education programs.
- **Senate Study Commission – State/Municipal Rx Distribution**
(**S0849** *Tassoni*)
This resolution would create a special Senate task force to develop a plan for the utilization of Eleanor Slater Hospital to disseminate prescription drugs to state and municipal workers, and would expire on July 31, 2009.
- **Public Entity Insurance Collaborative**
(**S 781** *Levesque*)
This act would allow any city, town, school committee, water or fire district, or other public or quasi-municipal authority, agency or entity, or organization that is an instrumentality of such cities or towns to establish agreements for obtaining or effecting insurance.

Special Senate Commission to Study Municipal Pensions

This resolution would create a five (5) member special Senate commission whose purpose it would be to make a comprehensive study of municipal pensions and who would report back to the Senate no later than June 30, 2010. The resolution was presented on the Senate floor and passed on June 30.