



# SMITH HILL REPORT

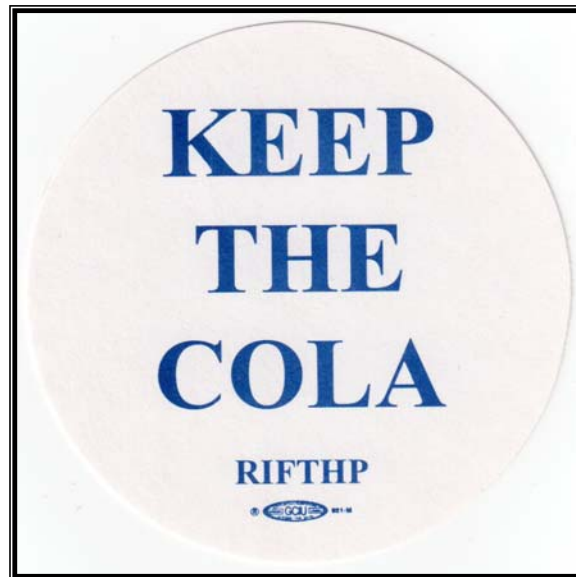
Published by the RI Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals, AFT, AFL-CIO  
[www.rifthp.org](http://www.rifthp.org)

Volume 13, No. 5, January 29, 2010

## Union Opposes Pension Changes

Wearing union stickers originally printed seven years ago when Governor Carcieri first proposed eliminating pension COLAs, the RIFTHP testified against Article 16 of the Governor's Supplemental Budget. The House Finance committee heard RIFTHP opposition to the proposal on January 12 and the Senate Finance Committee heard the same opposition on January 14.

Article 16 would change the pension COLA, or Cost Of Living Adjustment, for all teachers and State workers who were not eligible to retire as of September 30, 2009. This is the same group of workers who suffered pension cuts last session. In place of the automatic 3% compounded COLA, it would be up to the General Assembly on an annual basis to determine if pension benefits ought to be increased.



The RIFTHP objected to the proposal, noting that teachers and State workers have suffered two significant pension cuts in the past five years. We also noted that workers now pay for almost their entire pension benefit with high employee contributions, and that eliminating the COLA would make the pension benefit worth less than what employees contribute into the system.

The Governor has proposed balancing the Budget with a combination of cuts to cities and towns and a cut in the pension COLA. The current State Budget is over \$200 million in the red. The elimination of the pension COLA would save the State approximately \$43 million this year and would save local school districts (which pay a portion of teacher pension costs) an additional \$18.5 million.

The Assembly is now considering all of the Governor's proposals to balance the current State Budget. **Now is the time for all teachers and State workers to call their Senator and Representative to ask them to reject Article 16 and keep the COLA.** Contact information for all Senators and Representatives is available in the previous two issues of the Smith Hill Report ([www.rifthp.org/SmithHillReportArchives](http://www.rifthp.org/SmithHillReportArchives)) or on the RIFTHP website ([www.rifthp.org](http://www.rifthp.org)).

# Bill Introductions

## House Bills

- **Mandate Relief**  
(H7011 *Rice M., House Finance*)  
The RIFTHP **opposes** this act which would provide that if during any fiscal year the State reimbursement to cities and towns and school districts is insufficient to cover the costs of State mandates as reported by the Department of Revenue, those affected cities, towns and school districts may cease implementation of State mandates at their discretion up to fifty percent (50%) of the value.
- **Management's Rights**  
(H7091 *Corvese, House Labor*)  
The RIFTHP **opposes** this act which would codify and set forth certain management authority of school committees, which authority could not be bargained away through collective bargaining agreements.
- **Notification Date Change – May 15 – Recall Rights**  
(H7193 *Gablinski, House Labor*)  
The RIFTHP **opposes** this act which would amend the notification requirements regarding the dismissal, suspension or lay-off of teachers in the event of a fiscal exigency or program reorganization.
- **Mandate Relief Act – Coventry, West Warwick, Warwick**  
(H7236 *Serpa, House Labor*)  
The RIFTHP **opposes** this act which would relieve the Towns of Coventry and West Warwick and the City of Warwick from unfunded State mandates for a period of four years.
- **Caruolo Act Elimination**  
(H7135 *Serpa, House Finance*)  
(H7151 *Gemma, House Finance*)  
The RIFTHP **opposes** this act which would repeal the provisions of the so-called "Caruolo Act."
- **Elimination of Charter School Cap**  
(H208 *Gablinski, House Health, Education and Welfare*)  
The RIFTHP **opposes** this act which would remove the limit of twenty (20) charter schools and require at least one-half of the total number of charter public schools in the State to be reserved for charter school applications that are designed to increase the educational opportunities for at-risk pupils. Local communities are required to pay a portion of education costs to non-profit charter school operators. Therefore, charter school expansion is a massive unaffordable unfunded mandate.
- **Voter Initiative**  
(H7210 *Driver, House Judiciary*)  
The RIFTHP **opposes** this act which would provide a detailed process by which a proponent of a voter initiative and referendum proposal would present the proposal to the Secretary of State, the General Assembly and the Governor.
- **Voter Initiative**  
(H7212 *Driver, House Judiciary*)  
The RIFTHP **opposes** this act which would propose an amendment to the State Constitution by establishing a voter initiative process to allow voters to initiate proposed legislation which would, upon vote of the electorate, become law.
- **Notification Date – Termination of Tenured Teachers**  
(H7093 *Corvese, House Labor*)  
The RIFTHP **opposes** this act which would change the date by which school districts would be required to notify teachers that they are not being rehired, from March 1st to June 1st of the school year immediately preceding the school year in which the dismissal would become effective.