



# 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. 13, March 26, 2010

## **Supplemental Budget Rumors**

In January, the Governor proposed a plan to balance the current year's Budget which is over \$200 million in the red. This proposal, drafted as the Supplemental Budget bill, includes the elimination of teacher and State worker pension COLA's for those not eligible to retire as of September 30, 2009. The plan largely balanced the budget on the COLA cut and major cuts to cities, towns, and school districts.

The RIFTHP testified on several of the proposals in the Governor's Supplemental Budget in early January. In addition to the COLA elimination propose by Governor Carcieri, the RIFTHP opposed:

- Elimination of the Caruolo Act, permitting school districts to go to court to get sufficient municipal funding for education
- 3% funding reduction for public school districts
- City/Town Council ratification of contracts.

The House Finance Committee has been working on preparing a Supplemental Budget bill that may appear as early as next week. Among the many rumors circulating the State House about the Supplemental Budget is a belief that the COLA cut is still on the table. There has also been talk of approving the significant cut to municipalities and school districts and waiving the Maintenance of Effort provision in State law that requires municipalities to maintain at a minimum the prior year's local funding of education.

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 on the RIFTHP website ([www.rifthp.org](http://www.rifthp.org)).

## **Bill Introductions** **House Bills**

- **Administration of Medication by Nursing Assistants**  
(H7512 Shallcross-Smith, House Health, Education and Welfare)  
The RIFTHP **opposes** this act which would require the Director of Health to promulgate regulations permitting the administration of needle/injections, prescriptions and nonprescription medications by certified nursing assistants, home health care aides and medical technicians to individuals who are homebound or receive home care services within the State of Rhode Island.
- **Public Employee 20% Cost-Share**  
(H7819 Trillo, House Finance)  
The RIFTHP **opposes** this act which would require all State and municipal employees to contribute a minimum of 20% of the cost of health care benefits provided to them. The act would mandate that the State and municipalities shall not enter into any new contracts, extension of contracts, or renewal of contracts with any individuals or labor organizations unless the 20% co-share is included. The act also eliminates any payments to individuals for refusing the provided healthcare coverage.

## Senate Bills

- **Teacher Mediation Fees**  
(**S2379** *Ruggerio, Senate Labor*)  
The RIFTHP **supports** this act which would require that the State pay the total cost of compulsory mediation for school teacher contract negotiations.
- **School Staff Mediation Fees**  
(**S2381** *Ruggerio, Senate Labor*)  
The RIFTHP **supports** this act which would require the State to pay the cost of compulsory mediation involving municipal employees who work for school districts.
- **Definition of Vesting**  
(**S2384** *Ruggerio, Senate Labor*)  
The RIFTHP **supports** this act which would define “active member” and “vested” as it applies to members of the State Retirement System.
- **Council Approval of Employment Contracts**  
(**S2404** *Pinga, Senate Education*)  
The RIFTHP **opposes** this act which would require that all school contracts, including contracts of employment, must be ratified by the local taxing authority. It would also require any compensation to the school superintendent be approved by the city or town council.
- **West Warwick Mandate Relief**  
(**S2466** *Pinga, Senate Finance*)  
The RIFTHP **opposes** this act which would relieve the Town of West Warwick from the operation of any statute or regulation imposing upon any department or instrumentality of said Town of West Warwick any requirements or mandated action the full cost of which is not also paid by the State.
- **Vacating Arbitration Awards**  
(**S2684** *McCaffrey, Senate Labor*)  
The RIFTHP **supports** this act which would acknowledge arbitration as the preferred alternative labor dispute resolution mechanism and would limit instances when an arbitration award can be vacated.
- **PSI – Noninterference with Collective Bargaining**  
(**S2479** *Jabour, Senate Education*)  
The RIFTHP **supports** this act which would provide that the intervention provisions of the Rhode Island Student Investment Initiative Act (known commonly as Article 31) would not alter or affect rights or remedies of school employees provided under federal laws, State laws, local laws or collective bargaining agreements.
- **Public Employee 25% Cost-Share**  
(**S2512** *Cote, Senate Constitutional and Regulatory Issues*)  
The RIFTHP **opposes** this act which would require all State and local public employees to pay twenty-five percent (25%) of the premium costs of health care and dental benefits in any collective bargaining agreement executed with an effective date on or after April 1, 2010 or any extension effective after April 1, 2010.
- **Public Sector Card Check**  
(**S2566** *Goodwin, Senate Labor*)  
The RIFTHP **supports** this act which would authorize the Labor Board to certify and recognize union representatives of public employees that submit authorization cards signed by at least seventy percent (70%) of its eligible employee members. It would empower the Labor Board to investigate and prosecute coercion used to influence the outcome of controversy as to union representation.
- **Continuing Contract – Teacher Negotiations**  
(**S2603** *McCaffrey, Senate Labor*)  
The RIFTHP **supports** this act which would provide that if a successor collective bargaining agreement has not been agreed to by the parties, then the terms and conditions of the old teachers contract would remain in full force and effect until a new agreement is reached.