



The FEDERATIONIST

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Federation Weighs in on Major Bills

The General Assembly is in full swing, churning through hundreds of pieces of legislation in their various committees. The RIFTHP is there taking positions on those bills which would have an effect on our members, both current and retired.

There are a few bills in addition to reinstating the 1% retirement contribution for public employees, introduced by Rep. John Barr and Sen. Thomas Coderre, et al, which are at the top of our agenda. We have already testified on many and some are still being scheduled for hearings.

One of the most controversial items in this year's budget is the use of the money secured as a result of the suit brought by Rhode Island and many other states against the tobacco industry. The Governor and the Providence Journal have proposed using the entire allotment to reduce the state's debt. Lieutenant Governor Charles Fofarty and Congressman Robert Weygand have made a strong case for the funds to be utilized for health-related issues.



Rep. Paul Moura

We agree with the Congressman and Lieutenant Governor. There are student assistance counselors in some of our secondary schools. There are many more schools without staff trained to identify students with substance abuse problems. What a great way to use some of these funds...to help kids who are in trouble with alcohol and drugs.



Rep. Frank Montanaro

There are non-profit home health agencies on the brink of closure. Sen. David Iglozzi has proposed funding to home health care for the elderly hurt by cuts in federal aid. Utilising the "tobacco" money could make the difference for good quality care

A bill which we have had introduced for several years may finally see action. Several legislators have indicated interest in all-day kindergarten. As more information becomes known about the importance of early-childhood education, the more supportive some of our legislators have become. There are major bills in the hopper, one introduced by Rep. Paul Moura which provides for all-

day kindergarten for disadvantaged youngsters with financial support from the state. Rep. Frank Montanaro has introduced a bill requiring school districts to disclose what education programs, if any, they provide for students suspended for over ten days.

Finally, in our top hierarchy is Rep. Steve Smith and Sen. Donna Walsh's bill on alternative education placements for students who are suspended and expelled from school. This bill has been heard before. Often times it takes many years for a concept to grab and a bill to pass. Rep. Steve Smith's discipline code bill which passed hvo years ago is a case in point.



Sen. Donna Walsh

There may be last minute efforts to encroach on public employee retirement benefits or to create a two-tiered system. You may be hearing from your union that we need your help in contacting your senator and/or representative.

Retirement continues to be a popular target for some politicians.

Bits and Pieces...

Nothing good to say about residency

In the Providence School Department, 183 emergency certificates have been issued to a hard-working group of people who are trying to learn to teach



while they are teaching. Not unlike changing the tire while the car is traveling at

twenty-five miles per hour.

While politicians from the President of the United States to members of local school committees are calling for greater teacher accountability, classrooms are being staffed by individuals who may have a limited knowledge of the subject that they are teaching and/or a limited repertoire of skills and knowledge about children, their development, different ways in which they learn, signs of disabilities, and so on, and so on, and so on.

In Providence, there are nine emergency-certified teachers in mathematics. That number is larger than most math departments at a high school. There are ten general science emergency-certified individuals, nine in biological science, seven in chemistry and three in physics.

There are a total of nineteen in the areas of special education and forty-five emergency-certified teachers working in areas involving limited-English-proficient children.

The remainder are scattered across other areas, some where there are available teachers in

the state but who choose not to meet the city's residency requirement. For example, there are teachers holding emergency certificates in elementary, early childhood and secondary English.

According to the Rhode Island Department of Education, in the 1996-97 school year, there were 113 emergency certificates issued to Providence personnel. The number has grown to 183 certificates. Unless the residency requirement is lifted and the salaries climb out of the lowest ranked in the state, the students in greatest need will continue to receive instruction from individuals who themselves are still students in their subject areas and/or pedagogy.

Pawtucket is beginning to see an increase in its number of emergency-certified teachers. In the 1996-97 school year, there were six emergency-certified teachers on staff. The number has doubled to twelve. Pawtucket also has a residency requirement.

Woonsocket recently removed its residency requirement. In 1996-97, Woonsocket had grown to five emergency-certified staff. That number has grown by only one, showing a marked slowdown in the need to hire less than fully-certified staff.

Numbers are boring. But there are people standing behind these numbers. These people are represented by our local unions and we applaud their desire to be teachers and their fortitude in withstanding struggles that they experience by often being thrown into situations for which they have little training, knowledge or experience.

It is counter intuitive to be-

lieve that accountability measures will have credibility when less than certified personnel are manning classrooms. It is counter intuitive to believe that the best and brightest teachers will choose to teach in a community which limits their right to choose where they will reside. It is counter intuitive to believe that the best and the brightest will choose to teach in the community which will pay them less than any other community in the state.

It is short sighted for some politicians to think that neighborhood gentrification by teachers compelled to live within geographic boundaries is more important than the quality of instruction. It is also short sighted to think that no teacher except one living in the city where one teaches can relate to the student population. A recently-retired Providence teacher, whose husband is a doctor, lives on Blackstone Boulevard. Her relationship with her students was exemplary. A former providence teacher of the year who teaches a bilingual early childhood class and who lives in Pawtucket in a Spanish community is an example of why geographical boundaries as a criteria for teaching are nonsensical.

It's time for the sloganeering to end and for the assumptions behind the residency policies to be demystified. Residency and salary make a difference. Enlightened policymakers know they make a difference and should take appropriate action for our students' benefit.

Repeal residency. Raise salaries. Attract the best and the brightest.

Marcia Reback

“It is short sighted for some politicians to think that neighborhood gentrification by teachers compelled to live within geographic boundaries is more important than the quality of instruction.”

Teachers Don't Need to be Defended

Let's keep it that way

Teachers don't need defending against accusations of intentionally utilizing the new Standards Reference Exams to artificially inflate scores, to help individual students perform better on the assessments, scuttle the entire testing process or make their schools look better as compared to other schools. In my travels across Rhode Island, I meet hundreds of people, some in highly-placed positions, some who do not hesitate to criticize teachers, and thus far there is unanimous agreement that teachers who utilized copies of the test or items from it, did it in good faith and with nothing but the highest motivation.

I will admit that it has been a long time since I administered a standardized test. But I do remember that I paid attention to the changes in the school schedule to accommodate testing as this was extremely important. Then, when I received the test booklets, I immediately turned to the instruction page which indicted how much time was allowed for test administration, if time warnings were to be given, if a number 2 pencil had to be used. A!! the rest of the print seemed irrelevant to me.

It's not unlike getting a new appliance with a booklet that says "Read This First". I always go to the instructions. The "Read This First" booklet always goes away.

With the Standards Reference Exams, the "Read This First" information is very

important. There will be another opportunity for state assessments to be given this year. Please read the following cautions carefully:

1: Do not run copies of the test. Do not copy items from the test. Do not utilize any portion of the test in helping students next year to prepare for the test. If you do, after this year's experience, it may be considered a willful violation of the test's protocols, and very serious persona! repercussions may ensue.

2. Although the readministration and rescheduling again in May represents an inconvenience and a loss of instructional time, please keep complaints, legitimate though they may be, to a minimum. It is in no one's interest to keep this story alive for any longer than it has been played up by the press. There were tumors of State Police investigations, the Attorney General's office being invited in, and teachers being fined to pay for the loss of the cost of the test. This has thankfully been avoided. Teachers are best off maintaining a low profile, doing our jobs and getting this issue behind us.

3. The test publisher is providing Form D of the test at very low cost to Rhode Island. It seems that they were mailing copies of Form C (the test from last year and this year) to teachers upon request. These teachers were given the publisher's number to call for further information by the RI Department of Education during training sessions in the fall.

The publishers were not supposed to mail copies into RI.

4. Form D will be used again in 2000 and probably for several years following, until there are comparable assessments developed by NCEE. It is extremely important to maintain the integrity and security of the test, for both the State and for individual teachers and schools.

I attended the press conference when Peter McWalters announced that the state-wide assessments were being halted. He did not accuse teachers of cheating as was reported by Gene Vallacente and Morgan McVicar. I am not an apologist for the Commissioner, but the truth is important. One of his staff responded to a question implying that teachers would be cheating if there was malicious intent.

Since that time the Commissioner has made it privately and publicly clear that there is nothing to lead him to believe that there was any impropriety by teachers other than people ignoring directions in the assessment document, and that the motivations were in good faith. As of this printing, there have been no findings of an individual teacher who will be charged with wrongdoing. However, the Commissioner does not rule out the possibility that a few cases may arise where there is hard evidence that Form C was intentionally misused. If there is an accusation leveled against you by your superintendent or the RI Department of Education, call your union immediately.

Marcia Reback

"... the Commissioner has made it privately and publicly clear that there is nothing to lead him to believe that there was any impropriety by teachers..."

Take a Walk for Literacy

On Saturday, May 22, you are invited to bum off some calories, strengthen your leg muscles and strike a blow for literacy...a!! at the same time.

On May 22, 1999, the annual Walk for Literacy will raise money to support seven non-profit agencies which work with children and their parents, limited-English-proficient adults and adults who have little or no literacy skills. These agencies have multiple missions. Their programs concerning literacy are highlighted below.

* The Dorcas Place Parent Literacy Center serves about 360 low income and under-employed adults who need basic skills. Single parents and adults with learning disabilities are target populations.

* The Institute for Labor Studies and Research serves adults in workplace-based literacy courses and has a literacy program for unemployed adults.

* The Genesis Center focuses on teaching English to speakers of other languages and family and workplace literacy.

* The International Institute of RI provides English as a second language, family literacy and English for professional advancement.

* Literacy Volunteers of America provides service to eight local LVA affiliates where trained volunteers offer individual and small group tutoring in basic literacy and conversational English to adults.

* The Providence Public Library offers literacy support to about 400 Rhode Islanders each year through three lit-

eracy computer labs for use with tutors and their students; basic instruction in literacy; an adult collection of books for new readers; and other support and referral services.

* The RI Coalition of Library Advocates is an advocacy group supporting libraries of all kinds and does not provide direct service.

The Providence Teachers Union is coordinating the RIFTHP's participation in this year's walk for literacy. Please let Phyllis Tennian know that you are interested in helping out the adults who are new to our country and who need help learning English and those who have been here but never learned how to lift words from the page and put meaning to the words.

Phyllis has designated Jack MacManus to coordinate the effort. He can be reached at 278-0522 during the day and 42 1-57 16 in the evening. He can also be reached by FAX at 456-9275.

Governor to Honor Teacher Retirees

Governor Almond will make his annual proclamation honoring RI retired teachers on Wednesday, April 7, 1999. The ceremony will take place in the State Room of the State House at 2:00 P.M.

Both the RI Senate and House of Representatives will present formal resolutions in honor of our retired teachers starting at 3:30 P.M.

Retired teachers are invited to attend.



SAVE THE DATE

QuEST '99
Making *if Happen:*
Putting Theory Into Practice

Friday and Saturday
October 22,23,1999
Westin Hotel

Keynote Speaker
Sandra Feldman
AFT President

A New Way to Get the Blues

In the event that a physician or hospital does not submit claims on your behalf and you pay the provider directly, Blue Cross-Blue Shield, Blue Chip recently notified subscribers that claims had to be filed within ninety days (including Classic Blue) and Major Medical claims had to be filed within one year.

West Warwick Teachers Alliance President Don Vanasse raised a question about the propriety of changing the rules in mid-stream. As a result of his inquiry, Blue Cross has agreed to apply the deadlines on a go-forward basis. Should anyone be denied a claim on the basis that it was not tiled in a timely manner, they should call their local president.

"...the RI Senate and House of Representatives will present formal resolutions in honor of our retired teachers..."

St. Joseph's FNHP Ratifies Contract

The St. Joseph FNHP recently concluded negotiations with St. Joseph Health Services for a new contract covering the LPNs and technical employees at the Hospital for Specialty Care in Providence. The new contract is effective April 1 1999 and expires September 30, 2001.

Negotiations took place after the Union bargained a contract for the RN unit last fall. While many items reflect the RN contract, the Union broke new ground in several key areas.

"I was happy we gained important rights in this contract," said Donna Dopart DeVita, Union Executive Vice President and an LPN. She added, "The language on successors and assigns, prescription coverage and training for x-ray technicians were all important to our team."

"Gaining the right to follow our work if a unit moves is very important to workers here at the Providence facility. Having our contract expire the same date as the RNs will help keep the entire Union membership together next time we bargain," added Jan Clements, Union President.

The highlights of the new Agreement are:

* **Pay Increase**

4 different increases totaling 6% over the term of the 2 1/2 year contract

* **Notice of Model Change**

The Hospital will give the Union a 45-day notice of any decision to change the patient care model that would eliminate the use of LPNs.

◆ **Mileage**

The Hospital is required to reimburse employees for work-related travel at 30 cents per mile.

◆ **Medical Leave**

The Hospital will make every reasonable attempt to hold a position for an employee whose medical leave extends beyond 13 weeks.

* **Training**

The Hospital agreed to provide training for x-ray technicians to fulfill their CEU requirement.

* **Common Expiration Date**

The contract expires on September 30, 2001, the same date as the RNs, allowing the next contract negotiations to occur at the same time for both units.

* **Prescription Coverage**

Implement prescription program and HealthMate 2000 coverage.

* **Dental Coverage**

Increase maximum benefit from \$850 to \$1,000.

* **Co-Payments**

Freeze HealthMate 2000 co-pay for 1998-99 and reduce HealthMate 2000 part-time co-pay 5% effective October, 1999.

* **Successors and Assigns**

Except for pensions which would be negotiated, the contract will continue if St. Joseph is sold or merged into another institution.

* **Right to Follow Work**

If a unit moves within St. Joseph, employees have a right to follow

their work. Union representation will continue if a majority of bargaining unit members move to a new location as long as a separate bargaining unit is appropriate. Employees with 5 or more years of service will receive 6 months' health insurance if laid off because of a closure or transfer of a unit. Temporary transfers may not displace union members.

The Negotiating Committee consisted of Jan Clements, Union President; Donna Dopart DeVita, Melissa Medina, Leslie Elemo, Tony Sabella and Connie Sullivan. RIFTHP Field Representative James Parisi was Chief Negotiator.



"Gaining the right to follow our work if a unit moves is very important to workers here at the Providence facility."

Jan Clements

Union Opposes Network Restrictions

Blue Cross-Blue Shield of RI has a contract with Harbor Healthcare Management (HHM) to administer its mental health and substance abuse benefits. HHM is controlled by Care New England.

The network HHM put together excludes St. Joseph's Psychiatric Unit. On behalf of the entire RIFTHP membership who would lose choice, Marcia Reback has called on the Department of Health to not approve HHM's network.



"I was happy we gained important rights in this contract."

Donna Dopart DeVita

Connecting Standards to Instruction

“The performance standards have implications for all RI teachers, not just English teachers, math teachers and science teachers, and not just teachers in grades 4, 8, and 10.”

Colleen Bielecki

Teachers and administrators are talking about academic standards. Lists of what students should “know and be able to do” exist in just about every discipline and are at the center of Rhode Island’s accountability system (Article 31 and SALT). The standards movement is causing both activity and anxiety at the state, local, school and classroom level and, unfortunately, many have not had the opportunity to work closely with standards in order to develop a clear understanding of their implications for work.

Standards should describe both content and performance. Examples of such standards can be found in the English, Language Arts, Math, Science and Applied Learning Standards developed by the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE). These standards have become important to Rhode Islanders because the New Standards Reference Exams are aligned with the NCEE work. The standards also form the core of the RI Skills Commission’s Certificate of Initial Mastery.

The performance standards have implications for all RI teachers, not just English teachers, math teachers and science teachers, and not just teachers in grades 4, 8 and 10. For example, the reading standards are important for all teachers to know. Most high school science and social studies teachers report that many of their students’ difficulties relate to low performance in reading. A closer look at one of the reading standards and its implications follows.

Standard Ela (at all grade levels) states that students should read at least 25 books or book equivalents each year. *But don’t stop there!*

The standard further states that the material should be a traditional and contemporary mix, be from at least 3 different literary forms and be from at least 5 different authors. Additional standards state that students should read and comprehend at least 4 books or book equivalents about one issue or subject or 4 books in one genre; they should read and comprehend informational materials; they should read with accuracy and fluency; and they should be familiar with functional documents.

Each of the standards includes indicators of the performances necessary to meet the standard, such as making and supporting assertions about the text, comparing and contrasting themes, characters and ideas, making connections to related topics or information, and relating new information to prior knowledge.

Because the assessments and the performance standards are aligned, it becomes extremely important that faculty members have time to work together to discuss what they would like to do to move their students to meeting and exceeding the established benchmarks. The reading standards alone provide food for thought for whole school teams and departments. In general, last year’s results point out that in almost all our schools, students could improve their analytical reading skills. By looking at

the information from the assessment reports and the standards, faculties can develop school-wide plans to close gaps in student achievement. This is the intention of Article 31’s requirement for school improvement planning.

The next step is to ACT on the plans. The RIFTHP recommends that standards-based school improvement plans include the identification of the resources needed to show results. For example, following the kind of planning described above, faculty members may want to work together to encourage all students to read 25 books in a way that meets the “standards test” of covering a mix of genres and that includes opportunities to compare and contrast authors or themes. Reading records can be kept that go beyond a “Checklist” and include evidence of analysis or connections to related topics, particular subject areas or real world experiences. This may take some common planning time, some additional classroom or library resources or some staff development. All of which should be spelled out in the school improvement plan and be appropriately funded with Article 31 and/or district dollars.

The standards provide excellent guidance for instructional planning. If you don’t have copies of the standards in your school, ask your principal to get them. A faculty meeting to discuss the implications of the standards and how to change teaching practice to reflect standards might be an appropriate step to take next.

Grants Available to Teachers

Grants of \$2,500 to \$4,000 each are available to successful applicants from the Jordan Fundamental Grants Program. Applications must be post-marked by May 15 for the first round and November 1 for the second round. Eligibility is limited to teachers and para-professionals who work with students in grades 6 to 12 in a US public secondary school. At least 40% of the school's student population must be eligible for the free or reduced school lunch program.

Grants will be awarded to applicants who develop an outstanding lesson plan or thematic unit (a series of lessons with related learning objectives, united by a common theme). The proposal may focus on any academic or vocational-technical subject and should demonstrate high expectations for students who perform at a variety of academic levels. It should be original and not derived from a commercial package. Preference will be given to plans that exemplify high learning expectations for underserved students; meet local or state content standards; and advance the school's improvement plan.

The funds may be used for: resource materials, supplies,

equipment, software, professional fees, field trips and other items necessary to implement the plan. Funds may not be used to supplant normal school district expenditures (e.g. salaries).

The National Foundation for Educational Improvement (NFIE) will notify successful applicants in the first round by September 15 and in the second round by March 1. NFIE

will not notify those applicants who are not successful.

For copies of the full application form and guidelines for those with Internet capability, the NFIE website is: <http://www.nfie.com>. If you do not have access to the Internet, please call this office at 273-9800 and we will download a copy for you or you may call NFIE at 202-822-7840.

Labor History Conference Scheduled

***Women in Work: Past, Present and Future* is the subject of the one day, Saturday, April 10, RI Labor History Conference. It will be held at the Museum of Work and Culture, Market Square, 42 South Main Street, Woonsocket.**

The following is the schedule of the conference:

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 8:30 - 9:00 | Registration with Coffee and Pastry |
| 9:00 - 9:45 | <i>Women in the Restaurant Industry in Providence, 1890-1925</i>
Rick Stattler, Manuscripts Curator,
RI Historical Society |
| 10:00 - 10:45 | <i>Mother's Work Can Be Done: Lillian Gilbreth and the Scientific Management of Women</i>
Jane Lancaster, Research Fellow,
Brown University |
| 11:00 - 12:00 | <i>The Mill Girls</i>
Excerpts presented by the All
Children's Theatre Ensemble |
| 1:00 - 2:30 | <i>Born To Be W.I.L.D.</i>
<i>: Building the Rhode Island Woman's Institute for Leadership Development</i>
A panel discussion with outstanding members of W.I.L.D. |
| 2:45 - 3:30 | <i>Working Women: Paths to Power</i>
Catherine O'Reilly Collette,
Director, Women's Rights
Department, AFSCME International |

The Conference is free and open to the public. The RI Labor History Society is one of the largest labor history organizations in the U.S.A.

"Grants will be awarded to applicants who develop an outstanding lesson plan or thematic lesson..."



"Child labor laws don't apply to homework, Jimmy."

Rhode Island Federation
of Teachers and Health
Professionals

Marcia B. Reback, *President*

Robert E. Casey
Field Representative

Michael Mullane
Field Representative

James Parisi
Field Representative

Diana Casey
Staff Representative

Diane Thurber
Executive Assistant

Patricia Houlihan
Director of COPE Activities

Colleen Callahan Bielecki
Director of Professional Issues

Carol Santangini
Assistant to the Editor

Support the Ninth Annual Walk for Literacy



Date: Saturday, May 22, 1999

Start/Finish Line: Rhode Island State
House in Providence

Registration: 8:30 a.m.

Walk Starts: 9:30 a.m.

Distance: 10-K (6.2 miles) or the 1-mile "Fun Walk"

Note: Allow approximately 2 1/2 hours to walk the 10 kilometer (6.2 miles) route. The 1-mile "Fun Walk" should take about 15 to 20 minutes to walk. For your own comfort, wear socks and sturdy walking shoes. Water, snacks, and restroom facilities will be provided along the Walk route.