

Pension Bills

- **Placement of New State Workers in Defined Contribution (414(k)) Pension Plan**
(H7123 Loughlin, McManus, Story, Long, House Finance)
The RIFTHP opposes this act which would require newly-hired State employees to belong to a defined contribution retirement plan and not to the current traditional defined benefit plan.
- **House Pension Study Commission**
(H7141 Murphy, Kilmartin, Lima, E Corderre, Corvese, House Finance)
This resolution created a nineteen (19) member special House study commission whose purpose it is to make a comprehensive study of all aspects of the state pension or Retirement System, and who will report back to the House of Representatives no later than May 15, 2008. The House passed the resolution on January 24th.
- **Statewide Teacher Contract – Defined Contribution Pension**
(H7543 Loughlin, McManus, Ehrhardt, Story Amaral, House Finance)
The RIFTHP opposes this act which would require the creation of a uniform statewide teacher contract for all teachers hired after July 1, 2009. This act would also provide that such teachers would be required to participate in a defined contribution plan to be established by the Retirement Board, and would not participate in the current traditional defined benefit plan.
- **COLA limited to \$30,000 Pension Benefit**
(H7557 Singleton, Brien, Ehrhardt, Gablinske, House Finance)
The RIFTHP opposes this act which would limit all cost of living adjustments to members of the State Retirement System to the first \$30,000 of income received by such member.
- **Pensions – Final Average Salary 4 -6 years, COLA reduction**
(H7559 Singleton, Brien, Gablinske, House Finance)
The RIFTHP opposes this act which would reduce the calculation of retirement benefits which is currently based on the highest three (3) consecutive years' compensation. If compensation is less than fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000), the rate will be based upon the highest four (4) consecutive years; between fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) and seventy-five thousand dollars (\$75,000) the highest five (5) consecutive years; and over seventy-five thousand dollars (\$75,000) the highest six (6) consecutive years. It would also decrease the frequency of the cost of living increases to once every two (2) years if the retiree or beneficiary is receiving Social Security benefits.
- **Pensions – Final Average Salary – Position Held for 6 years**
(H7560 Singleton, Brien, Gablinske, House Finance)
The RIFTHP opposes this act which would, for purposes of calculating retirement benefits from the State Retirement System, exclude the compensation received from any position first attained within six (6) years of the retirement date.
- **Municipal Pension Reduction, Filing of Contracts**
(H7799 Ehrhardt, House Finance)
(S2664 Blais, Senate Finance)
The RIFTHP opposes these acts that would modify the retirement ages with respect to the municipal employees retirement system requiring a minimum age of 59 with 29 years of service to retire. Those with less than 29 years would not be eligible to retire until age 65. The bills would also require the filing of new collective bargaining agreements with the departments of revenue and education within a month of signing.

Health Insurance Bills

- **Prohibit Bargaining Specific Insurer or Provider**

(H7108 *Schadone, Corvese, Melo, Gablinske, Malik, House Labor*)

The RIFTHP *opposes* this act which would prohibit any municipal employee, municipal police, municipal firefighter, municipal teacher, state police, 911 commission employee and correctional officer, collective bargaining agreement from containing language which specifically identifies a specific medical, dental or optometric medical insurance company.

- **Scope of Bargaining–Teacher Medical Insurance**

(H7158 *Malik, Jacquard, Corvese, Gablinske, Gallison, House Corporations*)

(S2136 *Felag, Walaska, Bates, Senate Finance*)

The RIFTHP *opposes* these acts which would eliminate the school district and municipal obligation to bargain health insurance by requiring school districts and municipalities to participate in the state health insurance plan, where such participation is less expensive to the jurisdiction.

- **Supplemental Budget**

(H7204 *Mumford, Ehrhardt, Story, House Finance*)

Article 4 – Retiree Health Care.

This Article reduces funding for state worker retiree medical insurance for those who retire on or after July 1, 2008. The existing benefit provides for a State subsidy of retiree medical insurance from 50% up to 100% based on years of service for those with at least 10 years of service and are age 60. Those retiring on or after July 1, 2008 would have to pay the full cost of medical insurance except those who have twenty (20) or more years of service and are at least age 59. Those with 20 years of service would pay 20% of the cost of medical insurance and the State would pay 80%.

Budget Article 4 also creates a Retiree Health Care Trust Fund that would determine the annual employee contribution to fund the retiree medical insurance program, thus eliminating the .25% of pay rate currently paid by all active state workers to fund the benefit. The budget article seeks to include those in the higher education system into the state-run program. The RIFTHP *opposes* this Article.

- **State Employees – Dual Coverage, Waiver Payment Prohibition**

(H7349 *Baldelli-Hunt, Almeida, Pacheco, Brien, Story, House Finance*)

The RIFTHP *opposes* this act which would eliminate any credit or additional payment to the employee who waives medical insurance coverage. The bill would also require a state employee who is either married to another state employee or who is the domestic partner of another state employee to choose the least expensive health care plan, either family coverage or a second individual plan.

- **Restriction of Medical Insurance Waiver Payments**

(H7578 *Singleton, Palumbo, Brien, Gablinske, McManus, House HEW*)

The RIFTHP *opposes* this act which would prohibit persons who are married and both of whom are employed by the State or its municipalities from receiving health insurance payments from the State in lieu of getting health insurance if both persons are covered under one person's benefits.

- **Scope of Bargaining - Prohibit Naming of Health Insurer**

(H7776 *Malik, House Labor*)

(S2429 *Felag, Senate Labor*)

The RIFTHP *opposes* these acts that would require that the health care benefit plan shall not be specifically identified as an exclusive provider for benefits in public employee/union contracts.

Bargaining Bills

- **Supplemental Budget**
(H7204 Mumford, Ehrhardt, Story, House Finance)
Article 5 – Teacher / Municipal Worker Collective Bargaining.
This Article limits the scope of collective bargaining for teachers, municipal workers (including school support staff), police and firefighters. The RIFTHP opposes this Article which prevents contracts from containing medical insurance benefits and forces all workers into the State insurance program effective upon expiration of the current contract. The Article imposes the same cost-sharing in effect for state workers on teachers, school workers, police and firefighters. The Article requires these employees of local government to comply with the State payment for waiver of medical insurance, which is currently \$2002 per year.
- **Statutory School Committee Management Rights**
(H7208 Corvese, Gablinske, Melo, Schadone, House Health, Education, & Welfare)
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. Some of the specific issues cited are: teacher assignment, teacher evaluation, class size, and choice of healthcare provider.
- **Teacher Layoffs Based on Evaluations**
(H7209 Gablinske, Corvese, Singleton, Malik, Ucci, House Health, Education, & Welfare)
The RIFTHP opposes this act which would require the commissioner of elementary and secondary education to establish a layoff system for teachers based on a statewide performance evaluation implemented by each school committee. This act would also limit the process by which tenured teachers could be reassigned.
- **Statewide Teacher Evaluation System**
(H7210 Gablinske, Corvese, Singleton, Malik, House Health, Education, & Welfare)
The RIFTHP opposes this act which would direct the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop statewide teacher performance standards that would include “measures of student learning.” The bill would prevent negotiations on the evaluation process.
- **Teacher Strike Penalty**
(H7232 Gablinske, Corvese, Singleton, Malik, House Labor)
The RIFTHP opposes this act which would impose docking teachers 2 days of pay for every day on strike. Teacher unions would be fined \$1000 per day plus attorney fees in the event of teacher strikes.
- **Public Sector Union Dues Deductions**
(H7293 Loughlin, Amaral, Trillo, House Labor)
(H7665 Gorham, House Labor)
The RIFTHP opposes these acts which would prohibit payroll deductions from all State and municipal employees for union dues.
- **State Budget**
(H7390 Watson, Gorham, Story, Ehrhardt, Mumford, House Finance)
Article 36 – Fiscal Impact Statements.
The Governor’s budget proposal includes statutory language requiring school districts and municipalities to publish a fiscal impact statement covering the length of a contract plus an additional two years of any tentative agreement reached through collective bargaining. The fiscal impact statement would be submitted to the Auditor General. The School Committee or City / Town Council would be required to hold public hearings on the fiscal impact of a collective bargaining agreement prior to ratification.

- **City/Town Council Ratification of School Employee Contracts**

(**H7601** Singleton, Brien, Ehrhardt, Gablinske, McManus, House Labor)

The **RIFTHP** opposes this act which would require city or town council approval of any labor contract entered into by a school committee.

- **Scope of Bargaining – Elimination of Working Conditions**

(**H7664** Gorham, Mumford, House Labor)

The **RIFTHP** opposes this act which would strictly limit the subjects that public employee bargaining units can include in their contracts to wages and benefits. This act would take effect upon passage and would apply to all collective bargaining agreements executed thereafter.

- **Teacher Layoff / Termination / Evaluation Revisions**

(**S2620** Perry, Senate Education)

The **RIFTHP** opposes this act that would amend the provisions governing and the process for the dismissal of teachers in Rhode Island public schools. The bill weakens existing tenure provisions by permitting the termination of tenured teachers for a variety of reasons. Arbitrators, ruling on teacher dismissal cases, would be required to consider “the best interests of the pupils in the district and the need for evaluation of performance standards.” The bill also weakens seniority rights in layoff decisions. The State would be required to adopt evaluation standards.