

The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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Blizzard of '26 Disrupts Post-Recess Legislative Activity

Following the February General Assembly recess, legislative activity at the State House was brought to a halt by what many are already calling the *Blizzard of '26*, which delivered significant snowfall and hazardous travel conditions across Rhode Island.

As a result of the storm, no new bills were introduced this week, and all committee hearings scheduled for Tuesday were cancelled. Legislative leadership prioritized public safety, limiting access to the State House for lawmakers, staff, advocates, and members of the public.

The storm also forced RIFTHP to postpone its rally originally scheduled for Thursday. The event was expected to draw strong participation from members and coalition partners to advocate for key legislative priorities. We look forward to rescheduling the rally soon, when members can safely gather and fully demonstrate the strength of our collective voice.

While this unexpected pause temporarily slowed the legislative calendar, it does not change the urgency of the issues before the General Assembly. As activity resumes, RIFTHP remains fully engaged and prepared to advance policies that strengthen public education, support higher education, protect public employees, defend collective bargaining rights, and invest in Rhode Island's working families.

Status of RIFTHP Priority Legislation

Charter School Moratorium / Cap Reduction

Creates a three-year moratorium on new charter schools, would lower the state charter cap from 35 to 25

[H 7415](#)

Rep. Messier

House Education

Introduced 1-30

Rule of 90

Provides ERSRI and MERS members could retire at age 60 with at least 30 years of service

[H 7390](#)

Rep. Fellela

House Finance

Introduced 1-28

Student and Teacher Classroom Safety Act

Permits teachers to remove disruptive students from classroom environments to another setting and requires a collaborative plan to return the student to the classroom setting

[S 2524](#) Sen. Thompson Senate Education Introduced 2-13

[H 7526](#) Rep. Read House Education Introduced 2-6

Charter School Teacher and Administrator Prevailing Wage

Requires RIDE to publish information related to charter school teacher and administrator prevailing wages

[S 2634](#) Sen. Bissaillon Senate Labor & Gaming Introduced 2-13

Bills Awaiting Introduction

Charter School Funding Study Commission

Creates a charter funding joint study commission with a focus on administrative costs

DSP Pay Increases

Increases BHHDH reimbursements rates by \$2 / hour to fund pay raises for Direct Support Professionals working at organizations that support individuals with developmental disabilities

Questions

RIFTHP members with questions about the Smith Hill Report or our legislative agenda may reach out to RIFTHP Lobbyist Jeremy Sencer at (401) 273-9800 or at jsencer@rifthp.org.

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