

The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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Spring Break

The General Assembly was in recess last week, continuing the tradition of not meeting during the February and April school vacation weeks.

This week

- The Rule of 90 and other pension improvement bills will be heard in House Finance on Tuesday
- A bill to end state takeover of entire school districts will be heard in House Education on Tuesday
- A bill to permit state workers to negotiate longevity payments is scheduled for Tuesday in House Finance, as is a series of public employee COLA restoration bills
- Legislation to prevent charter school administrators from running anti-union campaigns will be heard in Senate Labor on Wednesday
- Legislation to increase the page rate paid to court reporters and electronic court reporters who prepare court transcripts is scheduled to be heard on Thursday in House Judiciary.

Bill Introductions

The Freedom To Read Act

([H 5726](#), Morales, House State Government & Elections)

([S 238](#), McKenney, Senate Education)

These bills would promote the free expression and free access of information by prohibiting the censorship of library materials. These bills would require the creation of a model policy related to library material within a public library and school library.

Teacher Certification Fees

([H 5743](#), House Finance)

([S 21](#), Acosta, Senate Education)

These bills would extend teacher certifications without fee or penalty for three (3) or five (5) years for teachers who hold certifications as of July 1, 2025. These bills would permit a teacher who has three (3) years of certified teaching experience to acquire an additional certification through examination or content coursework. These bills would also direct the Department of Elementary and Secondary education to revise its regulations pertaining to certification to create multiple pathways to obtain teacher and administrator certification.

Bilingual, Dual Language and World Language Teachers Certification

([H 5744](#), Morales, House Finance)

([S785](#), Vargas, Senate Finance)

These bills would authorize the office of the postsecondary commissioner to expand the issuance of bilingual, dual language and world teacher certificates in urban core and urban ring public schools by establishing two (2) scholarship programs, one for college students and one for eligible teachers. These bills would include detailed eligibility requirements and disbursement requirements for Rhode Island College (RIC) and the University of Rhode Island (URI). In addition, the bills would permit charitable donations to the scholarship program as well as require an annual appropriation of one million dollars (\$1,000,000) by the General Assembly.

Immigration Status - Resident Tuition Eligibility

([H 5745](#), Diaz, House Finance)

([S 22](#), Ciccone, Senate Education)

These bills would reduce the time, from three (3) years to six (6) months, required for a nonimmigrant foreign national student, who has resided in Rhode Island, to be eligible to pay the same in-state tuition as any other Rhode Island student.

Special Education Categorical - 3 Times Costs

([H 5750](#), O'Brien, House Finance)

This bill would amend the definition of the term "extraordinary costs" for the purposes of excess costs associated with Special Education students. The new definition of extraordinary costs would be educational costs that are over three (3) times the average statewide special education cost

Public Pension Accrual Increase

([H 5762](#), Slater, House Finance)

([S 659](#), Britto, Senate Finance)

These bills would recalculate the retirement allowance related to early retirement and pension benefits for teachers, state employees and municipal employees.

COLA Reinstatement - Investment Rate of Return

([H 5766](#), O'Brien, House Finance)

This bill would reinstate the cost-of-living adjustments for retirees, when the annual investment return of the retirement system exceeds ten percent (10%).

Providence School Based Councils

([H 5835](#), Kislak, House Education)

([S 634](#), Mack, Senate Education)

These bills would enable local school-based councils to be organized so as to enhance and promote more school-based management and control, and to enhance communication between the Providence School board and the individual schools.

Ethnic Studies

([H 5836](#), Morales, House Education)

This bill would require every high school to offer a yearlong "ethnic studies" course studying Rhode Island and American history and the experiences of racialized communities in Rhode Island and the United States. This bill would also direct the establishment of an ethnic studies leadership council to oversee implementation of the requirements of this section.

Sex Education Curriculum Disclosure

([H 5837](#), Roberts, House Education)

([S 395](#), Morgan, Senate Education)

These bills would provide that any school teaching sexual education to students shall provide the sexual education curriculum to every parent or legal guardian with a child in that school, and the parent or legal guardian shall consent, in writing, to the teaching of such sexual education curriculum to their child.

Questions

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

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