
The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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RIFTHP Supports FY 2025 Budget

The House of Representatives approved the proposed FY 2025 state budget on Friday, June 7 on a 69-5 vote. The budget contained a number of statutory changes supported by the RIFTHP. RIFTHP President Frank Flynn sent all Representatives a [letter](#) of support for the budget. In that letter, he highlighted aspects of the budget beneficial to RIFTHP members including:

- Restoring the pension calculation using an average of the highest consecutive three years instead of five years.
- The rejection of the Governor’s proposal to reduce education aid by creating a CPI cap which would have reduced education funding by \$26.3 million this year alone.
- Extending the Hope Scholarship pilot program at RIC for an additional two years.
- Extending the number of days retired teachers can work from ninety to one hundred eighty without impacting their retirement for an additional year while requiring districts to make appropriate pension contributions.
- Raising the income ceiling, retired Adjunct Professors at our public institutions of higher education can earn from \$18,000 to \$25,000 without a reduction in benefits.
- Restoration of annual cost of living increases for anyone who retired prior to 2012, which is an important first step in restoring necessary increases to all retirees.
- Reducing the funding ratio from eighty per cent to seventy-five per cent before retirees are eligible for an annual cost of living increase.
- A five percent increase in Multi Language Learner funding included in the core instruction formula, not as a categorical expenditure.
- Expanding the eligibility criteria for free and reduced breakfast and lunch programs to provide daily free meals for more students.

President Flynn commented on the improvements made for workers in the budget bill, saying “*On behalf of the RIFTHP I would like to thank Speaker Shekarchi, his leadership team, and the members of the House for all of the time and energy spent adopting this extremely comprehensive budget. There are many components which provide significant support to our members. We are particularly pleased that our “Final Average Salary” proposal is included. This will provide a pension increase for all future retirees. The budget includes several important education funding*

provisions which will aid our distressed K-12 communities, and our Higher Education members. The Speaker also recognized the need to begin the process of restoring pension benefits for our current retirees by including a partial COLA restoration for pre 2012 retirees and a state tax credit for many former ERSRI members.”

School Threats Bill Vote

On May 29, there was a lengthy debate in the House of Representatives on a bill that would make threats against school superintendents and other school employees a felony. [H 7303](#) was an initiative of the RI School Superintendents Association and had the full support of the RIFTHP, the NEA/RI and the AFL-CIO. RIFTHP President Frank Flynn submitted this [letter](#) of support for the bill when it was heard in the House Judiciary Committee.

Objections were raised by the ACLU and community groups about the bill not exempting students from the heightened penalty contained in the law. Many House Republicans also voted against the bill. The bill was approved on a 50-17 vote. After the floor debate, RIFTHP President Flynn said “We appreciate Representative Noret’s leadership on this bill which would provide the same level of protection which judges, and elected officials currently enjoy to members of the educational community including school superintendents, administrators, and teachers. It was extremely gratifying to hear the outpouring of support for teachers from the legislators who testified in support of the bill.”

Threats Against School Employees-Felony

Right	Wrong	Absent	Not Voting
Shekarchi, Abney, Ackerman, Alzate, Azzinaro, Baginski, Bennett, Biah, Blazejewski, Boylan, Brien, Caldwell, Cardillo, Carson, Casey, Casimiro, Cortvriend, Corvese, Costantino, Cotter, Craven, Dawson, DeSimone, Diaz, Donovan, Fenton-Fung, Finkelman, Fogarty, Handy, Hull, Kazarian, Kennedy, Knight, Lima, Marszalkowski, McEntee, McGaw, McNamara, Messier, Noret, O'Brien, Phillips, Serpa, Shallcross Smith, Shantley, Solomon, Speakman, Spears, Vella-Wilkinson, Voas	Ajello, Batista, Cruz, Giraldo, Henries, Lombardi, Morales, Nardone, Newberry, Perez, Place, Quattrocchi, Rea, Roberts, Sanchez, Stewart, Tanzi	Chippendale, Edwards, Felix, Fellela	Kislak, Morgan, Potter, Slater

Bills on the Move

The following bills have both passed the Committee that heard the bill and the full Senate chamber. Bills must pass both chambers in concurrence (in identical form) before being sent to the Governor for signature.

School Committee Agenda - Discussion Items

[H 7129-A](#), which was introduced by Representative Edwards, passed the House on 6/6/2024, with a vote of 53 yeas, 13 nays, and 9 members not voting.

This bill would allow school committees to add item(s) not appearing in the published notice to their agendas for the purposes of discussion only and not for the purpose of voting upon the item(s).

RIC School of Social Work Study Commission

[H 7627-A](#), which was introduced by Representative Casimiro, passed the House on 6/6/2024, with a vote of 70 yeas, 0 nays, and 5 members not voting.

This resolution would create a thirteen (13) member special legislative study commission whose purpose it would be to study the feasibility of utilizing Federal Title IV-E dollars to leverage and help enroll and graduate students in the field of social work, and who would report back to the House and Governor no later than February 11, 2025, and would expire on April 9, 2025.

School Emergency Drills Act

[H 8102-A](#), which was introduced by Representative Boylan, passed the House on 6/6/2024, with a vote of 69 yeas, 0 nays, and 6 members not voting.

[S 2950-A](#), which was introduced by Senator Cano, passed the House on 6/6/2024, with a vote of 35 yeas, 0 nays, and 2 members not voting.

This bill would revise the number, timing, and procedures to be followed when school's grades K through 12 implement fire drills, evacuation drills, and other emergency drills, designed to protect the health and safety of students. This bill would direct schools to work towards the implementation of trauma-informed practices in preparing and conducting those drills.

School Enrollment -- Student Success Act

[S 2983](#), which was introduced by Senator Ciccone, passed the House on 6/6/2024, with a vote of 35 yeas, 0 nays, and 2 members not voting.

This bill would reduce the time, from three (3) years to one year, 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.

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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