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# SMITH HILL REPORT



PUBLISHED BY THE RHODE ISLAND FEDERATION OF TEACHERS & HEALTH PROFESSIONALS/AFT, AFL-CIO

## School Breakfast, Textbook Loan Program Considered

On Tuesday, February 4, the House Finance Committee heard testimony on two proposals made by Governor Chafee in his education budget article to eliminate state reimbursement for the school breakfast program and the textbook loan program. In both instances, the programs would continue but the cost would shift from the State to the school districts. The proposals are in [Article 28](#) of the proposed state budget

RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi testified against both aspects of the proposal. He informed the Committee that teachers understood that student learning improves if children are not attending school hungry. He said the State should be considering adding state funding, not reducing state funding, for the breakfast program.

Parisi also testified against the cuts to the textbook loan program that reimburses school districts for certain textbooks they are required to loan to private school students. Parisi noted that the union does not support this subsidy to private education, but that if the program is mandated by State government, then the cost should be borne by the State and not the individual school districts. He also noted that publicly funded charter schools do not have to administer the textbook loan program but public school districts do, an inequity remedied by state funding.

Joining Parisi at the table of advocates against [Article 28](#) were representatives of the RI Association of School Committees and Kids Count.

Similar testimony was offered by the RIFTHP at a hearing on Thursday, February 6, before the Senate Finance Committee.

## Social Security Benefit Protection Urges

At a hearing before the Senate Finance Committee on Tuesday, February 4, James Parisi testified in support of protecting Social Security benefits for certain state workers. Last year, the Assembly created an alternative retirement plan for part time and seasonal workers that also took those workers out of Social Security coverage. The RIFTHP unsuccessfully urged the Assembly to amend the law to ensure that adjunct faculty, who are not eligible for ERSRI benefits, would not lose Social Security benefits. Even though the law has been implemented without impacting adjunct faculty, there could be future government officials who could use the existing law to threaten Social Security coverage to adjunct faculty.

[Article 9](#) is a technical correction to the alternative retirement plan called

February 7, 2014

### In This Issue

→ School Breakfast, Textbook Loan Program Considered

→ Social Security Benefit Protection Urges

→ Developmental Disabilities Funding Advocacy

→ Budget Article Hearings

→ Bill Introductions

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[Senate Contacts](#)

[House Contacts](#)

[Senate/House Committee Assignments](#)

FARP (which stands for the FICA Alternative Retirement Plan). The RIFTHP used the need for a technical correction as an opportunity to repeat its advocacy on behalf of adjunct faculty. A copy of the letter Parisi presented to the Senate Finance Committee can be viewed [here](#).



## Developmental Disabilities Funding Advocacy

The RIFTHP joined SEIU local 1199 in lobbying for additional state funding for organizations that provide services to the developmentally disabled. Center Employee Union President Lew Kelly and RIFTHP Political Director Maureen Martin asked members of the House of Representatives to support more funding for the agencies including Trudeau, where the RIFTHP represents 250 workers. A copy of the flyer used in the lobby effort can be viewed [here](#).

LaborVision is seen on Cox  
Ch. 14 and FioS Ch. 33

Tuesdays @ 7PM

Thursday @ 8PM

Saturday @ 5PM

## Budget Article Hearings

The House and Senate Finance Committees continue to hold public hearings on proposed statutory changes promoted by Governor Chafee in the form of budget articles. A previous [Smith Hill Report](#) highlighted a number of budget articles important to the RIFTHP membership. Some budget hearings were cancelled when the House and Senate sessions were cancelled on Wednesday.

The following budget hearing has been scheduled:

### **Tuesday February 11, Rise**

House Finance

- [Article 20](#) – Board of Education Reorganization

## Bill Introductions

If you would like to read the full text of a bill, just click on the bill number.

### **Tax Equity – Municipal Aid**

[\(H7245 Guthrie, House Finance\)](#)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would increase income taxes on the wealthy and direct the additional revenue to state municipal aid. These changes will take effect beginning January, 2015.

### **Standardized Test - Graduation Requirement - 5 Year Moratorium**

[\(H7256 Cimini, House Health, Education and Welfare\)](#)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would amend the method by which the State Assessment Program would be implemented in public schools. The bill would provide that no State Assessment conducted pursuant to Chapter 16-97 and prior to July 1, 2019, would be used to determine a student's eligibility to graduate from high school.

### **Student Loan Tax Credit**

[\(S2079 Pearson, Senate Finance\)](#)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which gives graduates of accredited institutions who remain residents and work in Rhode Island after receiving their degree will be eligible for a tax credit towards the balance

of their student loan.

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