

The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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

Act Now

Legislation to create a three year moratorium on using standardized testing as a graduation requirement is scheduled to be heard before the Senate Education Committee next Wednesday, May 7. If you care about the issue, reach out to your Senator about the issue by [clicking here](#). You may add or edit the message drafted for your convenience. Time is of the essence on this important issue for our students.



Please support the testing moratorium on the use of the NECAP as a graduation requirement

The Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals strongly supports Senate Bill 2059 Sub A, which is currently under consideration before the Senate Education Committee. This bill would prohibit the NECAP or any other state assessment from being used as a graduation requirement until July 1, 2017.

The NECAP test was never designed to be used as a measure to determine a student's eligibility to graduate.

Take action now. Let your Senator know you support this bill by using the link below.

In order to address your message to the appropriate recipient, we need to identify where you are. Please look up and use your full nine-digit zip for the best results.

The issue will also be considered at the next Board of Education meeting to be held on Monday May 12 at 5:30pm at the Blackstone Valley Academy Charter School on Broad Street in Cumberland.

Mayoral Academy Pension Status

On Thursday, April 17, 2014 the House Finance Committee took testimony on legislation that would place Mayoral Academy teachers and administrators in the state pension plan. Under current law, public school teachers and charter school teachers are required to participate in the state pension plan but mayoral academy staff are exempt. Legislation introduced by Rep. Deborah Fellela, [H7212](#), would remove that special pension deal from state law.

RIFTHP President Frank Flynn spoke in support of the bill. His testimony included the following:

"Mayoral academies are purported to be public schools. They are funded by local and state tax revenue. They are governed by the rules and regulations outlined in Title 16. They receive a per pupil expenditure from the sending local school district equal to the amount allocated for students educated within the local districts."

May 2, 2014

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A portion of that cost is the ARC (annual required contribution for pension benefits) which covers the districts pension obligation as determined and required by the state. That ARC is factored in to a district's per pupil expenditure. It is unfair for a district to be obligated to include that percentage in their per pupil allocation to the mayoral academies for an expense they do not incur."



Pension Funding Bill Considered

For several years, the RIFTHP has testified in support of legislation that would prevent the State from reducing teacher and state worker pension contributions from one year to the next. The RIFTHP repeated their testimony at a hearing of the House Finance Committee on Wednesday, April 16. [H7885](#), introduced by Representative Handy, would create a maintenance of effort requirement on pension funding.

RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi testified in support of the bill. He noted that pension COLA's are contingent on the level of funding in the pension plan, and that the Assembly should never reduce pension payments while retiree COLAs remain suspended. He also told the Committee that maintenance of effort provisions appear elsewhere in state law. For example, state law requires cities and towns to maintain the prior year's level of local funding to public schools.

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

Tuesdays @ 7PM

Thursday @ 8PM

Saturday @ 5PM

Bill Introductions

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

Lead Poisoning Prevention Funding

[\(H7803 Handy, House Finance\)](#)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would provide that in the event of insufficient federal funds for the Environmental Lead Program, the General Assembly shall appropriate no less than six hundred thousand dollars (\$600,000) per year for support and maintenance of the Environmental Lead Program, and five hundred ninety thousand dollars (\$590,000) per year for the State match for the Lead Hazard Abatement Program.

Municipal Pension Revocation

[\(H8035 Slater, House Judiciary\)](#)

[\(S2773 Goodwin, Senate Finance\)](#)

The RIFTHP opposes these bills which would prevent any retired municipal employee convicted of any offense punishable by life in prison from collecting a public pension during his or her period of incarceration.

Retirement Benefit Cap

[\(S2451 Walaska, Senate Finance\)](#)

The RIFTHP opposes this bill which would cap the lifetime retirement benefits awarded to retired state and municipal employees, and retired teachers, to the highest salary level achieved by those groups during the three (3) year period immediately prior to the date of retirement. This act would apply to those individuals retiring on or after July 1, 2014.

Charter School Funding – Out-of-District Special Education Costs

[\(S2870 Gallo, Senate Finance\)](#)

The RIFTHP supports this bill which would change the method in determining the local share of the per pupil amount for each student

attending the charter public school by allowing deductions for allocations not born by the charter school based on uniform chart of accounts data. Local district payments to charter public schools would be made at the end of the district's school quarter for those students enrolled in the charter school during the quarter.

Public Records – Administrator and School Employee Evaluations
([S2880](#) Gallo, Senate Judiciary)

The RIFTHP supports this bill that adds school administrators and other school employees to the existing provision of law that exempts teacher evaluations from being public records.

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