

The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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Assembly Returns

The General Assembly returned to work this week after having recessed for the February school vacation week. There were hundreds of new bills filed this week. The Assembly focused on the bridge and road repair legislation prior to the recess. There were not many bill hearings on issues of importance to the RIFTHP this week. There will be numerous bill hearings in House and Senate committees over the next two months.

FY 2017 Budget Overview

On Tuesday, February 23, the House Finance Committee heard from House Fiscal Advisor Sharon Reynolds Ferland giving them an overview of the Governor's proposed budget. You may view her 120 slide presentation [here](#). Another valuable resource is the House Fiscal Advisory Staff's summary titled [Budget at a Second Glance](#). Information on school district education aid is contained in this summary beginning on page 65.

FY 2017 Rhode Island Primary April 26

Rhode Island voters will have a chance to weigh in on the Presidential race when polls open for the RI Presidential Primary on Tuesday, April 26, 2016. RIFTHP members living in Massachusetts have an opportunity to vote this coming Tuesday, March 1. Massachusetts is one of eleven states holding primary elections that day in what has been come to be known as Super Tuesday.

In order to vote in the Presidential Primary, one must be registered to vote 30 days in advance. The Rhode Island primary election voter registration deadline is March 27. Registration forms and other voter information is available at the RI Secretary of State's [website](#).

Bill Introductions

Pension Contributions – Maintenance of Effort

[\(H7556\)](#) *Handy, House Finance*

The RIFTHP supports this act which would require the yearly state contribution to the pension system not be reduced until the fund ratio meets or exceeds eighty percent (80%).

Standardized Testing Regulations, Reports

[\(H7580\)](#) *Tanzi, House Health, Education and Welfare*

This act would establish a mandatory reporting requirement for all students in grades K-12 for any assessments administered, along with specifics which must be included in the report. It also requires annual reports from schools commencing on July 1, 2017 as to all assessments administered by September 1, 2017, and annually thereafter, a collection of the data in the reports by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, in a searchable format on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website.

Teacher Certification – CPR/AED Requirement

[\(H7661\)](#) *Giarruso, House Health, Education and Welfare*

The RIFTHP opposes this act which would require that teachers be certified in the use of first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation and automated external defibrillator (AED) use prior to teacher certification, with exceptions for those who are disabled and those employed in a school which lacks an AED device.

Higher Education – Tuition Equity

[\(S2203\)](#) *Pichardo, Senate Finance*

The RIFTHP supports this act which would create the "Student Equal Economic Opportunity Act" which would identify those students who are exempt from paying nonresident tuition at public universities, colleges or community colleges.

Constitution – Line Item Veto

[\(S2304\)](#) *Raptakis, Senate Judiciary*

[\(S2362\)](#) *O'Neil, Senate Judiciary*

The RIFTHP opposes these joint resolutions which would submit to the electors a constitutional amendment granting the governor the power to utilize a line item veto for appropriations.

Dyslexia Targeted Assistance

[\(S2337\)](#) *Lombardi, Senate Education*

The RIFTHP supports this act which would add dyslexia-targeted assistance as a required aspect of the literacy program for students at the elementary grade level.

School Social Worker Data Collection

([S2339](#) Satchell, Senate Education)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would create a process for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for the collection and organization of information concerning the workload and scope of the duties and responsibility performed by school social workers.

Higher Education Performance Funding

([S2392](#) Paiva Weed, Senate Education)

This act would add a performance-based component to the state funding formulas for CCRI, RIC and URI. It directs the commissioner of postsecondary education, along with the Council on Postsecondary Education, to create a performance formula by utilizing certain specific measures. Implementation of a postsecondary education funding formula would need prior approval of the general assembly.

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