

The

SMITH HILL REPORT



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Legislators Oppose DeVos

A network of progressive legislators called the State Innovation Exchange (SIX) circulated a letter among state legislators to oppose the nomination of Betsy DeVos as Education Secretary. The letter can be viewed [here](#).

A number of Rhode Island Senators and Representatives signed onto the letter. The RIFTHP appreciates their public statement against an incredibly unqualified nominee. Those signing onto the letter include:

- Senator Louis DiPalma
- Senator Hanna Gallo
- Senator Gayle Goldin
- Senator Adam J. Satchell
- Representative Edith H. Ajello
- Representative Gregg M. Amore
- Representative Susan Donovan
- Representative William O'Brien
- Representative Jeremiah T. O'Grady

RI AFL-CIO Opposes Trump Immigration Ban

The Rhode Island AFL-CIO issued the following statement regarding the Executive Order signed by President Trump related to immigration.

"President Donald Trump's executive order banning immigrants and refugees is an affront to the values we hold dear and true as Americans. All people should be outraged at Trump's actions, but we as Rhode Islanders should be especially offended. Rhode Island was founded by Roger Williams on principles of religious freedom and welcoming with open arms, all oppressed people no matter their background.

The Rhode Island AFL-CIO leadership calls on President Trump to immediately rescind his executive order. One of the abiding ideals of the labor movement has been, and always will be, an injury to one is an injury to all. Donald Trump's executive order is a grievous injury to the millions of immigrants and refugees who, over

generations, have come to America seeking a better life and in turn, have made America great. The Rhode Island labor movement stands in solidarity with all who oppose Trump's executive order.

That Trump's order was signed on Holocaust Remembrance Day should be a stark and sobering reminder of past eras when immigrants and refugees were banned from America based on their religious views. May we never forget the words of German Protestant minister, and leader of the church's opposition to the Nazis, Martin Niemöller:

*First they came for the communists, and I did not speak out –
because I was not a communist;*

*Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out –
because I was not a trade unionist;*

*Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out –
because I was not a Jew;*

*Then they came for me –
and there was no one left to speak out for me.”*

RIFTHP Opposes Required Professional Development

Representative John Lombardi introduced a bill that called upon RIDE to provide professional development opportunities to teachers geared toward students with reading disabilities. The bill also requires teachers to receive 2 hours of professional development annually on reading disabilities, including dyslexia. The RIFTHP testified against the bill, [H5048](#), at a hearing of the House Health, Education and Welfare Committee on January 25th. RIFTHP lobbyist James Parisi told the committee that the RIFTHP is a strong supporter of quality professional development. He voiced objection to a statutory two hour professional development requirement for certain teachers. This would be layered on top of existing RIDE and School District requirement. No action was taken on the bill.

Bill Introductions

Student Loan Forgiveness Program

([H5143](#) Ackerman, House Finance)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would establish "The Get On Your Feet Loan Forgiveness Program" in Rhode Island, to assist recent college and university graduates from certain schools in the repayment of their student loans. The program would provide for a period (the first 2 years after graduation and any applicable deferment period on the graduate's student loans) whereby the state would pay a graduate's student loans, provided the individual meets certain requirements.

Student Loan Forgiveness Program

([H5169](#) *Morin, House Finance*)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would establish "The Get On Your Feet Loan Forgiveness Program" in Rhode Island, to assist recent college and university graduates in the repayment of their student loans, by providing a grace period for the first 2 years after graduation.

Constitutional Amendment – Voter Initiative

([S0051](#) *Raptakis, Senate Judiciary*)

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

Voter Initiative

([S0083](#) *Cote, Senate Special Legislation*)

The RIFTHP supports this act which would establish "The Get On Your Feet Loan Forgiveness Program" in Rhode Island, to assist recent college and university graduates in the repayment of their student loans, by providing a grace period for the first 2 years after graduation.

Constitutional Amendment – Voter Initiative

([S0084](#) *Cote, Senate Special Legislation*)

The RIFTHP opposes this joint resolution which would propose an amendment to the state constitution, by establishing a voter initiative process to allow voters to initiate proposed legislation which would, upon a majority vote of the electorate, become law.

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