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Legislative Press Bureau at (401) 528-1743

THIS WEEK AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

STATE HOUSE — Here are the highlights from news and events that took place in the General Assembly this week. For more information on any of these items visit <http://www.rilegislature.gov/pressrelease>



- **House Oversight gives transportation vendor three weeks to fix problems**
The House Committee on Oversight, chaired by Rep. Patricia Serpa (D-Dist. 27, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick), met Thursday to review hundreds of complaints lodged against a new vendor that provides transportation to Medicaid beneficiaries, the elderly and handicapped. At the conclusion of the hearing, the panel gave all parties involved three weeks to correct the problems by the time the Oversight Committee meets again on Thursday, Feb. 28.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Sen. McCaffrey, Rep. Bennett bill seeks to curtail use of plastic soda straws**
Senate Majority Leader Michael J. McCaffrey (D-Dist. 29, Warwick) has introduced legislation to curtail the use of plastic straws in restaurants. The bill ([2019-S 0202](#)) would prohibit a food service establishment from providing a consumer with a single-use plastic straw, unless the consumer requests such a straw. Rep. David A. Bennett (D-Dist. 20, Warwick, Cranston) has introduced similar legislation ([2019-H 5314](#)) in the House of Representatives.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Sen. Seveney, Rep. Canario bill adds substance abuse fines to DUI**
Sen. James A. Seveney (D-Dist. 11, Portsmouth, Bristol, Tiverton) and Rep. Dennis M. Canario (D-Dist. 71, Portsmouth, Tiverton, Little Compton) have introduced legislation ([2019-S 0238](#), [2019-H 5293](#)) that would impose a \$300 fine on any conviction of driving under the influence or a violation for refusal to submit to a Breathalyzer. The fines would be used to fund substance abuse programs.
[Click here to see news release.](#)

More...

- **Rep. Shanley bill would change funding procedure for career/tech education**
Rep. Evan P. Shanley (D-Dist. 24, Warwick) has introduced legislation that would overhaul vocational funding, making the procedure fairer and more equitable both to host communities and those sending students out of district. The bill ([2019-H 5266](#)) would amend the law governing career and technical education programs to provide standards in curriculum, additional opportunities for students, and would provide certain tuition formulas and reimbursement rates.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Casimiro bill would require gas, electric and cable credits for outages**
Rep. Julie A. Casimiro (D-Dist. 31, North Kingstown, Exeter) has reintroduced legislation ([2019-H 5313](#)) that would require utility and cable companies to provide bill credits to customers after service is interrupted for 168 hours within a 30-day period. The companies would be prohibited from recovering the cost of the bill credits by instituting a surcharge on the customer, including any rider, adjustment clause or recovery mechanism that is added to a customer's bill.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Sen. Goldin elections bills aimed at increasing access to voting, running for office**
Sen. Gayle L. Goldin (D-Dist. 3, Providence) introduced a package of elections and campaign finance bills aimed at improving voter access, requiring disclosure of presidential candidates' tax returns and making it easier for ordinary people to run for office.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Sexual harassment bills introduced in House of Representatives**
A package of bills aimed at preventing workplace sexual harassment and discrimination was introduced in the House by members of a legislative commission that studied the issue last year. The bills were sponsored by Rep. Teresa Tanzi (D-Dist. 34, South Kingstown, Narragansett), who led the commission, as well as Rep. Evan P. Shanley (D-Dist. 24, Warwick), Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee (D-Dist. 33, South Kingstown, Narragansett) and Rep. Camille F.J. Vella-Wilkinson (D-Dist. 21, Warwick).
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Deputy Speaker Lima introduces bill to address panhandling problem**
Deputy Speaker Charlene M. Lima (D-Dist. 14, Cranston, Providence) has introduced legislation ([2019-H 5330](#)) that would make it a traffic violation with substantial fines for any operator of a motor vehicle or its passengers to pass anything out of a motor vehicle while on any road or highway while still in the active lane of travel.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Slater bill would prohibit firing employees who use medical marijuana**
Rep. Scott A. Slater (D-Dist. 10, Providence) has introduced legislation ([2019-H 5290](#)) that would prohibit employers from refusing to hire, discharging or otherwise discriminating against any individual on account of their medical use of marijuana. It would also make drug testing of prospective employees subject to the protections of the bill.

- **Ruggiero bill would create business sustainability designation**

Rep. Deborah Ruggiero (D-Dist. 74, Jamestown, Middletown) introduced legislation to encourage Rhode Island businesses to adopt stronger environmental standards on sustainability. The bill ([2019-H 5145](#)) creates a voluntary, flexible program that would allow businesses to earn a sustainability designation by creating their own set of benchmarks for operating sustainably, and publicly reporting annually on their efforts to adhere to them.

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