

June 7, 2019

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>



- **Senate passes Ruggerio’s Plastic Waste Reduction Act**
The Senate approved legislation introduced by Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) that would enact the Plastic Waste Reduction Act. The legislation ([2019-S 0410Aaa](#)) is designed to reduce the use of plastic bags by retail establishments by offering recyclable bag options and providing penalties for violations. The measure now heads to the House of Representatives, which is considering similar legislation ([2019-H 5671A](#)) introduced by Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee (D-Dist. 33, South Kingstown, Narragansett). [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate votes to ban housing discrimination against voucher recipients**
The Senate approved legislation to ban housing discrimination against tenants or prospective tenants who receive housing subsidies. The legislation ([2019-S 0331](#)), sponsored by Sen. Harold M. Metts (D-Dist. 6, Providence), adds “lawful source of income” to the list of statuses — such as race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and marital status — that landlords may not use as a basis for their decisions about to whom they will rent, or which units they will rent to them. Rep. Anastasia P. Williams (D-Dist. 9, Providence) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2019-H 5137](#)) in the House. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate approves ban on 3-D printed guns and other untraceable firearms**
The Senate approved legislation ([2019-S 0084 Aaa](#)) sponsored by Sen. Cynthia A. Coyne (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence) to ban 3-D printed firearms and other untraceable or undetectable firearms in Rhode Island, including those

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violating the federal requirement for serial numbers and those that don't present an accurate image of their shape in a metal detector. Rep. Patricia A. Serpa (D-Dist. 27, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2019-H 5786](#)) in the House.

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▪ **House OKs bill to encourage settlement of lawsuits from 2014 circus accident**

The House approved legislation sponsored by House Majority Leader K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) to encourage settlements in lawsuits stemming from the 2014 Ringling Brothers circus accident in which eight acrobats were hurt at the Dunkin' Donuts Center in Providence. The bill ([2019-H 5475A](#)) protects the Rhode Island Convention Center Authority — and ultimately taxpayers — from facing the expense of additional lawsuits resulting from the same incident. The measure now moves to the Senate, which passed similar legislation ([2019-S 0494A](#)) sponsored by Sen. Erin Lynch Prata (D-Dist. 31, Warwick, Cranston).

▪ **Senate OKs legislation protecting animals in domestic abuse cases**

The Senate approved legislation introduced by Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) that would protect pets in the wake of animal abuse cases. The legislation ([2019-S 0225](#)) would expand Family Court jurisdiction to enter protective orders to provide for the safety and welfare of household pets in domestic abuse situations. The measure now moves to the House of Representatives, where similar legislation ([2019-H 5023](#)) has been introduced by Rep. William W. O'Brien (D-Dist. 54, North Providence).

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▪ **Senate OKs Miller bill to explore 'harm reduction center' pilot**

The Senate approved legislation ([2019-S 0297A](#)) sponsored by Senate Health and Human Services Committee Chairman Joshua Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence) to study the creation of a pilot program to create "harm reduction centers" to help prevent drug overdose deaths. The centers would be supervised facilities for drug users, staffed by health care professionals who could help in cases of overdose and make treatment referrals. Rep. Scott A. Slater (D-Dist. 10, Providence) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2019-H 5545](#)) in the House.

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▪ **Senate OKs bill to let gay, transgender discharges be recorded as honorable**

The Senate approved legislation ([2019-S 0837](#)) sponsored by Sen. Dawn Euer (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown) to provide a petition process to have a discharge recorded for state purposes as honorable for members of the armed services who were discharged due solely to sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression. Doing so will allow them to receive all state benefits to which honorably discharged veterans are entitled, even if they have previously been denied. The measure now moves to the House of Representatives, which has passed similar legislation ([2019-H 5443A](#)) introduced by Rep. Camille F.J. Vella-Wilkinson (D-Dist. 21, Warwick).

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▪ **Senate passes bills to address wage gaps**

The Senate passed two measures sponsored by Sen. Gayle L. Goldin (D-Dist. 3,

Providence) and Sen. Maryellen Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence) to help address pay gaps affecting women and members of minority groups. Senator Goldin's bill ([2019-S 0509](#)) would provide protections and transparency in the workplace to help women and people of color demand equal pay for equal work. Senator Goodwin's bill ([2019-S 0172](#)), would collect data from employers of 100 or more people in Rhode Island to help determine industries and areas where pay gaps occur, and their extent.

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▪ **Senate approves bill to allow child care as election expense**

The Senate approved legislation sponsored by Sen. Gayle L. Goldin (D-Dist. 3, Providence) to allow candidates for office to use campaign funds for child care while they are participating in elections activities, as federal candidates now can. The bill ([2019-H 0323](#)) is designed to make Rhode Island campaign finance law mirror a 2018 Federal Elections Commission decision. Rep. Justine A. Caldwell (D-Dist. 30, East Greenwich, West Greenwich) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2019-H 5736](#)) in the House.

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