

June 28, 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>



- **General Assembly approves 2020 state budget bill**

The General Assembly has approved a \$9.97 billion budget ([2019-H 5151Aaa](#)) for the 2020 fiscal year that largely avoids new taxes while strengthening education, continuing the car-tax phase-out, maintaining municipal aid and closing a \$200 million budget gap. The bill, which now goes to the governor, expands pre-kindergarten programs, authorizes the creation of Special Economic Development District on the former Route 195 land in Providence and provides raises for direct care workers for the developmentally disabled.

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- **General Assembly passes education reform legislation**

The General Assembly approved two bills intended to reform education in Rhode Island. The first ([2019-S 0863B](#), [2019-H 5008B](#)), introduced by Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick) and Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston), would require the Commissioner of Education to align statewide academic standards with curriculum and the Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System. The second bill ([2019-S 0869A](#), [2019-H 6085Aaa](#)), sponsored by Sen. Harold M. Metts (D-Dist. 6, Providence) and Rep. Jean Philippe Barros (D-Dist. 59, Pawtucket), would require the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to establish a fast-track program to certify new principals. Both measures now move to the governor's office.

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More...

- **Legislature OKs bill to extend civil statute of limitations for sexual abuse**

The General Assembly passed legislation ([2019-H 5171B](#)) sponsored by Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee (D-Dist. 33, South Kingstown, Narragansett) and Sen. Donna M. Nesselbush (D-Dist. 15, Pawtucket, North Providence) that amends the state’s civil statute of limitations for childhood sexual abuse. The legislation extends the statute of limitations for childhood sex abuse claims to 35 years. The legislation would also extend to 35 years the statute of limitations for entities, individuals or organizations that caused or contributed to childhood sexual abuse through negligent supervision, conduct, concealment or other factors that enabled the abuse to occur.

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- **Budget eliminates ‘tampon tax’ in RI**

The budget bill approved by the Assembly includes the proposal submitted earlier this session as separate legislation ([2019-H 5307](#), [2019-S 0049](#)) by Rep. Edith H. Ajello (D-Dist. 1, Providence) and Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Little Compton, Tiverton, Newport) to exempt menstrual products from Rhode Island’s 7-percent sales tax.

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- **Proposal for separate URI board included in budget bill**

The budget bill includes the creation of a Board of Trustees for the University of Rhode Island. The provision, initially proposed in separate legislation ([2019-H 6180](#), [2019-S 0942](#)) sponsored by House Speaker Nicholas A. Mattiello (D-Dist. 15, Cranston) and Sen. V. Susan Sosnowski (D-Dist. 37, South Kingstown, New Shoreham), would move the state’s sole university out from under the auspices of the Council on Post-Secondary Education.

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- **Lawmakers OK bill creating teams to prevent violence at schools**

The General Assembly approved legislation ([2019-H 5538](#), [2019-S 0818](#)) sponsored by House Speaker Nicholas A. Mattiello (D-Dist. 15, Cranston) and Senate Education Committee Chairwoman Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick) to increase school safety by creating threat assessment teams in schools to serve as the “boots on the ground” in identifying potentially threatening behavior by those in the school community.

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- **Assembly passes several bills targeting opioid epidemic**

Lawmakers approved two bills sponsored by House Speaker Nicholas A. Mattiello (D-Dist. 15, Cranston) and Senate President Dominick Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) to place limits on first-time opioid prescriptions ([2019-H 5537A](#), [2019-S 0981](#)) and expand the Good Samaritan Overdose Prevention Act to include law enforcement and emergency medical personnel ([2019-H 5536](#), [2019-S 0953](#)). They also both sponsored the creation of the Opioid Stewardship Fund ([2019-S 0798A](#), [2019-H 6189](#)), later added to the budget bill, to assess a fee on pharmaceutical companies that sell opioids to pay for addiction prevention and treatment programs. With Rep. Justine A. Caldwell (D-Dist. 30, East Greenwich, West Greenwich), President Ruggerio also sponsored a bill passed ([2019-S 0799Aaa](#),

[2019-H 6184Aaa](#)) to prevent insurers from denying life insurance to people who fill a prescription for the anti-overdose drug naloxone. Another bill ([2019-H 5184](#), [2019-S 0291aa](#)) sponsored by Representative Caldwell and Sen. Bridget G. Valverde to require signs at pharmacies warning customers about dangers associated with opioids also passed.

[Click here to see news release on multiple opioid bills.](#)

[Click here for release on warning signs bill.](#)

- **Alzheimer’s care, elder abuse bills approved**

The Assembly approved four bills to better support Rhode Islanders affected by Alzheimer’s disease and to protect against elder abuse. The bills are all sponsored in the Senate by Sen. Cynthia A. Coyne (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence), who led a task force that studied elder abuse and released its final report this week. One bill ([2019-S 0223](#), [2019-H 5178](#)), sponsored in the House by House Majority Leader K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick), would establish a program within the Department of Health dedicated to Alzheimer’s disease. Another bill ([2019-S 0302A](#), [2019-H 5141](#)), sponsored in the House by Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston), allows the spouses or partners of patients residing in Alzheimer’s or dementia special care units or programs to live with them. A third bill ([2019-S 0603A](#), [2019-H 5573](#)), sponsored in the House by Rep. David E. Bennett (D-Dist. 20, Warwick, Cranston), expands a law that requires people to report elder abuse. The final bill ([2019-S 0845A](#), [2019-H 6114](#)), sponsored in the House by Rep. Patricia A. Serpa (D-Dist. 27, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick), requires those who serve as guardians for other adults to pass nationwide background checks.

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- **Assembly OKs bill establishing ‘supported decision making’**

The General Assembly approved legislation ([2019-S 0031A](#), [2019-H 5909](#)) sponsored by Sen. Adam J. Satchell (D-Dist. 9, West Warwick) and Rep. Robert E. Craven (D-Dist. 32, North Kingstown) to establish a formal process recognizing “supported decision making,” a structure of support for disabled or aging individuals that is less restrictive than guardianship. Supported decision making helps individuals maintain independence while receiving assistance in making and communicating important life decisions.

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- **Assembly passes bill aimed at preventing service animal misrepresentation**

The General Assembly approved legislation ([2019-S 0308A](#), [2019-H 5299aa](#)) sponsored by Sen. Roger A. Picard (D-Dist. 20, Woonsocket, Cumberland) and Rep. Bernard A. Hawkins (D-Dist. 53, Smithfield, Gloucester) to prevent owners from misrepresenting a pet as a service animal in order to gain access to rights or privileges reserved for disabled individuals with service animals.

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