

March 1, 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>



- **House Majority Leader Shekarchi files bill to cut taxes**

House Majority Leader K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) has introduced legislation to help the many Rhode Island small business owners who will be hit by higher federal taxes under President Trump's new tax laws. The bill ([2019-H 5576](#)), which is revenue-neutral for the state, will provide a work-around for owners of "pass-through" entities whose state and local taxes exceed the new \$10,000 cap on the state and local tax (SALT) deduction on their federal tax returns. Sen. Mark P. McKenney (D-Dist. 30, Warwick) has introduced the bill in the Senate.

[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Rep. Diaz bill would freeze beach parking fees for next three years**

In the wake of a proposal to increase the state's beach parking fees — and with the support of House leadership — Rep. Grace Diaz (D-Dist. 11, Providence) has introduced legislation ([2019-H 5792](#)) that would guarantee the rates remain the same for the next three seasons. Parking fees were substantially increased in 2011. In 2016, the General Assembly rolled back the fees to the pre-2011 rates.

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- **Senate OKs bill expanding support following overdose, mental health ER visits**

The Senate approved legislation sponsored by Sen. Joshua Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence) to expand the Alexander C. Perry and Brandon Goldner Act on hospital discharge planning. The legislation ([2019-S 0139A](#)), which now goes to the House, would amend the Rhode Island statute consistent with new federal guidance by allowing hospitals to contact the patient's emergency contact and certified peer recovery specialist in certain situations. House Majority Whip John G. Edwards (D-

More...

Dist. 70, Tiverton, Portsmouth) has filed similar legislation ([2019-H 5383](#)) in the House.

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▪ **Rep. Shanley, Sen. DiPalma call for \$15 minimum wage for caregivers**

Rep. Evan P. Shanley (D-Dist. 24, Warwick) and Sen. Louis DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Little Compton, Tiverton, Newport) have introduced legislation ([2019-H 5338](#), [2019-S 0437](#)) that would move direct support professionals — those who assist Rhode Islanders living with intellectual and developmental disabilities — to a \$15 minimum wage over the next two years.

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▪ **Sen. Sheehan, Rep. Kislak introduce public campaign funding bill**

Sen. James C. Sheehan (D-Dist. 36, North Kingstown, Narragansett) and Rep. Rebecca M. Kislak (D-Dist. 4, Providence) have introduced legislation ([2019-S 0457](#), [2019-H 5726](#)) that would provide public funding for legislative political campaigns in addition to general offices. Participation in the program would be voluntary. Public financing of elections is designed to ensure that no particular donor has an outsized influence on the outcome of any election.

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▪ **Rep. Solomon, Sen. McKenney bill would create sales tax holiday**

Rep. Joseph J. Solomon Jr. (D-Dist. 22, Warwick) and Sen. Mark McKenney (D-Dist. 30, Warwick) have filed legislation to establish a sales tax holiday for the weekend of Aug. 10-11, 2019. The legislation ([2019-H 5048](#), [2019-S 0286](#)) would exempt items below \$2,500 from the state's 7-percent sales tax. The holiday would not apply to sales of telecommunications, tobacco products, gas, steam, oil, electricity, motor vehicles or motorboats.

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▪ **Rep. Ajello, Sen. DiPalma sponsor bill to eliminate 'tampon tax' in RI**

Rep. Edith H. Ajello (D-Dist. 1, Providence) and Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Little Compton, Tiverton, Newport) have filed legislation ([2019-H 5307](#), [2019-S 0049](#)) to make tampons, panty liners, menstrual cups, sanitary napkins, and other similar products used in connection with women's menstrual cycles exempt from Rhode Island's 7-percent sales tax.

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▪ **Sen. McCaffrey, Rep. Slater bill prioritizes treatment over prosecution**

Senate Majority Leader Michael J. McCaffrey (D-Dist. 29, Warwick) and Rep. Scott A. Slater (D-Dist. 10, Providence) have introduced legislation ([2019-S 0472](#), [2019-H 5760](#)) that would reclassify simple drug possession for personal use as a misdemeanor, bringing Rhode Island's statute in line with at least 20 other states. This drug reclassification reform is expected to reduce Rhode Island's prison population and generate related savings for the state.

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▪ **Rep. Serpa bill would compensate those who have been wrongfully imprisoned**

Rep. Patricia Serpa (D-Dist. 27, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick) has introduced

legislation ([2019-H 5329](#)) that would give compensation to innocent people who have spent time behind bars but later released when new evidence shows they were not guilty. The law would authorize an award of \$50,000 for each year served in a correctional facility.

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▪ **Rep. Ackerman bill would protect consumers' right to pay with cash**

Rep. Mia Ackerman (D-Dist. 45, Cumberland, Lincoln) has introduced legislation that would protect the rights of customers to pay for things in cash. The legislation ([2019-H 5116](#)) would make it unlawful for any retail establishment offering goods or services for sale to discriminate against a prospective customer by requiring the use of credit for purchase of goods or services.

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