

Feb. 28, 2020

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 President Ruggerio’s Plastic Waste Reduction Act**
The Senate passed the Plastic Waste Reduction Act that was introduced by Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence). The legislation ([2020-S 2003A](#)) 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 moves to the House of Representatives, where similar legislation ([2020-H 7306](#)) has been introduced by Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee (D-Dist. 33, South Kingstown, Narragansett).
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate OKs Gallo bill allowing school committees to fund school field trips**
The Senate passed legislation introduced by Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick) that would allow school committees to budget funding for school field trips. The legislation ([2020-S 2327](#)) would guarantee that all students have the same ability to attend field trips. It would also allow schools to raise funds to supplement field trip funding. The measure now moves to the House of Representatives, which has passed similar legislation ([2020-H 7069A](#)) introduced by Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston)
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **House OKs Bennett bill to allow students sunscreen in schools**
Students in Rhode Island schools would not be denied the right to possess and apply sunscreen under legislation ([2020-H 7123A](#)) sponsored by Rep. David Bennett (D-Dist. 20, Warwick, Cranston) and unanimously approved by the House. The bill will now head to the Senate, where Senate Health and Human Services Chairman Joshua

More...

Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2020-S 2176](#)).

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▪ **House votes to repeal bill allowing subminimum wages for disabled workers**

The House approved legislation ([2020-H 7287](#)) sponsored by House Majority Leader K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) to repeal a law that allows employers to pay workers with disabilities below the minimum wage. In 2014, as part of a settlement of a Department of Justice lawsuit, the state ended the use of sheltered workshops where intellectually or developmentally disabled individuals in day programs performed work for wages significantly below the minimum wage. But the state law allowing subminimum wage for disabled people remains on the books.

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

The Senate approved legislation ([2020-S 2273aa](#)) 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 campaign or officeholder activities. The bill now goes to the House, where Rep. Justine A. Caldwell (D-Dist. 30, East Greenwich, West Greenwich) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2020-H 7548](#)).

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▪ **Senate passes Sen. Crowley's juror fee bills**

The Senate passed two pieces of legislation relating to juror fees sponsored by Sen. Elizabeth A. Crowley (D-Dist. 16, Central Falls, Pawtucket). The first bill ([2020-S 2266](#)) passed by the Senate raises juror's fees for each day's attendance on the Superior Court from \$15 per day to \$25 per day, starting July 1, 2021. The wage would increase to \$35 per day commencing July 1, 2022, and thereafter. The second bill ([2020-S 2267](#)) allows jurors to donate their juror fees to the state into the general fund. The bills now move to the House, where similar legislation ([2020-H 7616](#)) raising juror fees has been introduced by Rep. Anastasia P. Williams (D-Dist. 9, Providence).

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▪ **Sen. Lawson bill would require schools to provide feminine hygiene products**

Sen. Valarie J. Lawson (D-Dist. 14, East Providence) has introduced legislation ([2020-S 2183](#)) that would require all public schools to provide feminine hygiene products at no cost. According to the bill, at the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year, all public schools teaching grades six through 12 would make feminine hygiene products available in the schools. Similar legislation ([2020-H 7839](#)) has been introduced in the House by Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee (D-Dist. 33, South Kingstown, Narragansett).

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▪ **Rep. Millea introduces bill to allow public grand jury reports**

Rep. Christopher T. Millea (D-Dist. 16, Cranston) has introduced legislation ([2020-H 7641](#)) that would allow grand juries to issue reports to the public after review and acceptance by the Superior Court. According to the legislation, a grand jury would be able to submit a report to the Superior Court for public release. A minimum of 12

grand jurors must request and sign off on the request to the Superior Court. If the Superior Court determines the grand jury report is not appropriate for public release, the attorney general may appeal the decision to the state's Supreme Court. Similar legislation ([2020-S 2441](#)) has been introduced in the Senate by Sen. Mark McKenney (D-Dist. 30, Warwick).

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▪ **Bill would end animal use in medical training**

Advocates and physicians called for the passage of legislation ([2020-H 7211](#), [2020-S 2341](#)) sponsored by Sen. Bridget Valverde (D-Dist. 35, North Kingstown, East Greenwich, Narragansett, South Kingstown) and Rep. Joseph J. Solomon Jr. (D-Dist. 22, Warwick) to limit the use of live animals for medical training in Rhode Island. Brown University's emergency medicine residency, which takes place at Rhode Island Hospital, is one of only a handful of emergency medical training programs in the country, and the only one in New England, that still uses animals to train doctors.

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▪ **Legislation would raise revenue from top 1 percent of earners**

Legislation ([2020-H 7921](#)) sponsored by Sen. William J. Conley Jr. (D-Dist. 18, East Providence and Pawtucket) and Rep. Karen Alzate (D-Dist. 60, Pawtucket) would add one new tax bracket — from 5.99% to 8.99% on adjusted gross income above \$475,000. The legislation would raise \$128.2 million in new tax revenue, and would only impact the top 1% of tax filers. Similar legislation ([2020-S 2494](#), [2020-H 7664](#)) introduced by Sen. Ryan W. Pearson (D-Dist. 19, Cumberland, Lincoln) and Rep. Gregg Amore (D-Dist. 65, East Providence) would add a new tax bracket for income earned over \$500,000. It would add one percentage point to the 5.99% top rate with incremental revenue dedicated to education.

[Click here for Conley/Alzate release.](#)

[Click here for Pearson/Amore release.](#)

▪ **Rep. Kennedy bill would cap the cost of insulin at \$100 per 30-day supply**

Speaker Pro Tempore Brian Patrick Kennedy (D-Dist. 38, Hopkinton, Westerly) has introduced legislation ([2020-H 7126](#)) that would limit the total amount that an insured person is required to pay for a covered prescription insulin drug at \$100 per 30-day supply of insulin, regardless of the amount or type of insulin needed to fill the covered person's prescription. Similar legislation ([2020-S 2322](#)) has been introduced in the Senate by Sen. Melissa A. Murray (D-Dist. 24, Woonsocket, North Smithfield).

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