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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>



- **General Assembly session convenes in renovated chambers**
The House of Representatives and the Senate convened their 2020 legislative sessions, meeting in chambers that have been extensively renovated to bring them up to safety codes, improve sound and technology and restore paint colors and other details to the way they were originally designed when the building was constructed at the dawn of the 20th century.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Speaker Mattiello lays out legislative priorities on opening day of House**
Speaker of the House Nicholas A. Mattiello (D-Dist. 15, Cranston) opened the 2020 session by highlighting his legislative priorities. Speaker Mattiello stated his first priority is producing a balanced budget that addresses all of Rhode Island's needs. He also addressed funding the continued phase-out of the car tax, partnering with the state's healthcare and small business communities to continue to strengthen our well-being and economy, and continuing education reform that began last year with the passage of several bills.
- **President Ruggerio says education tops Senate's 2020 agenda**
Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) convened the Senate for its 2020 legislative session, laying out the agenda for the year and making education the top priority. In addition to education, President Ruggerio identified adequate housing, prescription drug affordability, banning 3-D printed guns, pay equity, banning plastic bags and solar siting as legislative priorities.

More...

- **Legislative chambers equipped with new assistive listening system**

A new hearing loop system, which transmits sound electronically to telecoil-equipped hearing aids and all cochlear implants, has been installed in both legislative chambers, making Rhode Island one of the first state capitols in the country to have both of its legislative chambers and its public galleries equipped with permanent large area hearing loops, and improving access to the legislative process for Rhode Islanders. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Mattiello, Ruggerio file bill on compassion center expansion**

House Speaker Nicholas A. Mattiello (D-Dist. 15, Cranston) and Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) filed legislation ([2020-H 7013](#), [2020-S 2006](#)) to address separation of powers issues connected to compassion center licensing statutes and regulations. The bill addresses the separation of powers lawsuit filed by the executive branch against the Assembly over the 2019 law allowing more compassion centers, as well as concerns that the executive branch is creating its own violation of separation of powers through its proposed regulations. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Bill would ban 3-D printed guns and other untraceable firearms**

As investigators grapple with what may be Rhode Island’s first murder committed with a 3-D printed gun, Sen. Cynthia A. Coyne (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence) has reintroduced legislation ([2020-S 2004](#)) to outlaw such weapons. Rep. Patricia A. Serpa (D-Dist. 27, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick) has filed identical legislation ([2020-H 7085](#)) in the House. The legislation would prohibit the possession, manufacturing or selling of 3-D printed guns, “ghost guns” and other untraceable or undetectable firearms in Rhode Island. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. McNamara bill would exempt home health care products from taxes**

Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) has introduced legislation ([2020-H 7053](#)) that would exempt home health care products from taxation, including walkers, wheelchairs, ramps, stair lifts, or any product that assists an individual in staying in their own home, as opposed to a nursing facility. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate President Ruggerio introduces Plastic Waste Reduction Act**

Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) has introduced the Plastic Waste Reduction Act. The legislation ([2020-S 2003](#)) is designed to reduce the use of plastic bags by retail establishments by offering recyclable bag options and providing penalties for violations. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. O’Brien reintroduces bill to arm campus police at public colleges**

Rep. William W. O’Brien (D-Dist. 54, North Providence) has reintroduced legislation ([2020-H 7043](#)) mandating the arming of campus police officers at the state’s public colleges after reviewing reports from the University of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, and the Community College of Rhode Island on the broader issues of campus policing regarding arming officers. [Click here to see news release.](#)

- **General Assembly celebrates 100th anniversary of women’s right to vote**
On opening day of the 2020 legislative session, the General Assembly celebrated the 100th anniversary of Rhode Island’s ratification of the 19th Amendment, which granted women the right to vote in Rhode Island. Both chambers passed resolutions commemorating the event. Deputy Speaker Charlene M. Lima (D-Dist. 14, Cranston, Providence) sponsored the resolution ([2020-H 7005](#)) in the House of Representatives and Senate Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence) sponsored the resolution ([2020-S 2002](#)) in the Senate.

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