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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>



- **Senate approves ban on 3-D printed guns and other untraceable firearms**
The Senate approved legislation ([2020-S 2004Aaa](#)) sponsored by Sen. Cynthia Coyne (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence) to outlaw 3-D printed firearms, ghost guns and other untraceable or undetectable firearms in Rhode Island. Similar legislation ([2020-H 7102A](#)), sponsored by Rep. Patricia A. Serpa (D-Dist. 27, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick), was approved by the House Judiciary Committee and is expected to come before the House for a vote next week. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate Judiciary hears DiPalma bill that protects parents with disabilities**
The Senate Judiciary Committee heard a bill ([2020-S 2139](#)) sponsored by Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Little Compton, Newport, Tiverton) that precludes the disability of a parent from serving as a basis for denial or restriction in matters involving a child's welfare, foster care, family law, guardianship and adoption. Rep. Terri Cortvriend (D-Dist. 72, Portsmouth, Middletown) is the sponsor of the companion legislation ([2020-H 7295](#)) in the House of Representatives. [Click here to see news release](#)
- **Bill would raise RI Works rates for first time in nearly 30 years**
Sen. Melissa Murray (D-Dist. 24, Woonsocket, North Smithfield) and Rep. Michael A. Morin (D-Dist. 49, Woonsocket) are sponsoring legislation ([2020-H 7345](#)) to increase cash assistance to needy families for the first time in nearly 30 years and link the rate to inflation. The state has not adjusted benefits paid through the Rhode Island Works program since 1991, and the average enrolled family receives about \$6 per member daily, which amounts to about 31 percent of the federal poverty level.

More...

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- **Donovan bill would ban intentional release of balloons**
Rep. Susan R. Donovan (D-Dist. 69, Bristol, Portsmouth) has introduced legislation ([2020-H 7261](#)) to protect the environment and wildlife by banning the intentional release of balloons. All released balloons become litter, and many end up in waterways, where they are sometimes ingested by animals, who then can suffer painful deaths.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Cure bill would incentivize discovery of cures for major diseases**
House Majority Leader K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) has introduced legislation ([2020-H 7394](#)) to add Rhode Island to a multistate compact that would offer very large monetary prizes to those who identify a cure to major deadly disease. The multibillion-dollar prizes would be funded by the money saved by compact member states as a result of the disease being cured, and the hope is that it would serve as greater incentive to fund research into cures for, as opposed to management of, diseases.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Bill would snip onerous licensing fees, requirements at salons**
Rep. Jason Knight (D-Dist. 67, Barrington, Warren) has introduced legislation aimed at reducing onerous licensing requirements and fees targeting hair salons. The legislation ([2020-H 7112](#)) eliminates a \$170 shop licensing fee that barber shops, salons and those who rent stations in them must pay annually in addition to their hairdressing or barber license fee, and removes a section of law that allows a hairdressing license to be denied unless the applicant “is of good moral character.”
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Solomon bill calls for safety barriers on Narragansett Bay bridges**
Rep. Joseph J. Solomon Jr. (D-Dist. 22, Warwick) has introduced legislation ([2020-H 7366](#)) that would direct the Department of Transportation, in conjunction with the Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority, to erect safety barriers or netting on the Mount Hope Bridge, the Claiborne Pell Bridge, and the Jamestown Verrazzano Bridge by Jan. 1, 2022.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Task force on educational funding formula releases report**
A special Senate commission chaired by Sen. Ryan W. Pearson (D-Dist. 19, Cumberland, Lincoln), which was tasked with studying Rhode Island’s education funding formula, has released its findings and recommendations. Based on testimony received during five public hearings, the task force recommends both near-term and long-term solutions. Near-term recommendations are areas where action can be taken in the 2020 legislative session, while long-term recommendations will require additional work by stakeholders before final legislative enactment.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
[Click here to see the full report.](#)

- **Rep. Vella-Wilkinson bill calls for General Assembly witnesses to be sworn in**
Rep. Camille F.J. Vella-Wilkinson (D-Dist. 21, Warwick) has introduced legislation that would require witnesses offering testimony to General Assembly committees to be sworn in. The bill ([2020-H 7298](#)) would require all witnesses who are representatives of a state department or agency appearing in their official capacity or any expert witness who is testifying before the General Assembly or any committee to be sworn before testifying. Anyone testifying falsely would be guilty of perjury before the General Assembly.
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Sen. Felag says Veterans Article 16 in FY 2021 budget is unacceptable**
Sen. Walter S. Felag (D-Dist. 10, Warren, Bristol, Tiverton) voiced his opposition to Article 16 of the governor's proposed [FY 2021 state budget](#), which relates to the state Veterans Home in Bristol. The revenue generators the administration is proposing are taking 100% of a veteran's income to live at the Veterans Home, rather than the 80% currently in law; confiscating deceased veterans' estates in probate if no next of kin can be located; and increasing the fee for spouses buried next to their partners in the Veterans Cemetery.
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