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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>



- **Shekarchi re-elected Speaker; lists housing, doctor shortage as top priorities**
Speaker of the House K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) was re-elected to lead the House of Representatives as the 2025-2026 term began. He outlined a legislative agenda topped by addressing the state's affordable housing and homelessness crises, and pledged to address a primary care doctor shortage, a sizeable budget deficit and investigate the state's failed westbound Washington Bridge.
- **Senate President Ruggerio re-elected; lays out legislative priorities for 2025**
Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) was once again chosen to preside over the Senate for its 2025-2026 term, laying out the agenda for the year. Ruggerio spoke of the great challenges facing the legislature, including a looming budget deficit. He announced that the Senate will establish a new Committee on Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies to focus on policy related to the legal, societal and ethical implications of those technologies.
- **New senators sworn into office**
Six new members of the Rhode Island Senate joined their colleagues and took the oath of office on Tuesday. Senators Peter Appollonio Jr. (D-Dist. 29, Warwick), Andrew Dimitri (D-Dist. 25, Johnston), Todd Patalano (D-Dist. 26, Cranston), Brian Thompson (D-Dist. 20, Woonsocket, Cumberland), Lori Urso (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket) and Lammis Vargas (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence) were sworn into office by Rhode Island Secretary of State Gregg M. Amore.
- **New representatives take oath of office**

More...

Six new members of the Rhode Island House of Representatives joined their colleagues and took the oath of office on Tuesday. Representatives Jenni A. Furtado (D-Dist. 64, East Providence), Earl A. Read III (D-Dist. 26, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick), Richard Fascia (R-Dist. 42, Johnston, Cranston), Marie Hopkins (R-Dist. 21, Warwick), Christopher G. Paplauskas (R-Dist. 15, Cranston) and Paul Santucci (R-Dist. 53, Smithfield, Glocester) were sworn into office by Rhode Island Secretary of State Gregg M. Amore.

▪ **New committee chairs appointed in Senate**

Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) appointed new leaders for several committees for the 2025-2026 term. The Judiciary Committee will be chaired by Sen. Matthew L. LaMountain (D-Dist. 31, Warwick, Cranston). Sen. Melissa A. Murray (D-Dist. 24, Woonsocket, North Smithfield) will lead the Health and Human Services Committee. Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick) will chair the Education Committee. The Environment and Agriculture Committee will be led by Sen. V. Susan Sosnowski (D-Dist. 37, South Kingstown). Sen. Robert Britto (D-Dist. 18, East Providence, Pawtucket) will lead the Commerce Committee. Sen. Jacob Bissailon (D-Dist. 1, Providence) will chair the Housing and Municipal Government Committee.

▪ **State leaders, advocates celebrate greater paid family leave, child care eligibility**

Leaders from the General Assembly, McKee administration, advocates and families with young children gathered at the Federal Hill House Early Learning Center in Providence Thursday to celebrate the implementation of two important programs that support Rhode Island young children and working families: the expansion of Rhode Island's Temporary Caregivers Insurance program to seven weeks of paid family leave, and the expansion of eligibility for Rhode Island's Child Care Assistance Program to families earning 261% of the federal poverty level, the highest level in state history.

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

▪ **House Speaker addresses Interfaith Coalition poverty vigil at State House**

Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) and Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Little Compton, Newport, Tiverton) spoke to a gathering of the Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty as the organization marked its 17th annual vigil at the State House Tuesday. Speaker Shekarchi told those assembled "We're making progress, but progress is not enough until all Rhode Islanders have a safe place to live and enough food to eat."

▪ **Legislators call on governor to declare homelessness a public health emergency**

A group of 46 legislators called on Gov. Dan McKee to declare homelessness a public health emergency. "Your leadership is needed now to protect and save the lives of Rhode Islanders across our state, including our working-class neighbors, our children, and our veterans," they said in their statement to the governor.

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

