

Jan. 20, 2023

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 rilegislature.gov



- **2024 budget bill introduced in House**

The House of Representatives received Gov. Daniel J. McKee's proposed state budget ([2023-H 5200](#)) for the 2024 fiscal year. The \$13.75 billion plan includes tax cuts and funding increases for public and higher education, health care, housing and environmental programs. The House and Senate Finance committees will begin holding hearings on the proposal in the coming weeks.

- **Governor delivers State of the State address to General Assembly**

Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) and Speaker of the House K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) welcomed Gov. Daniel J. McKee to the House chamber to hear his first State of the State address as the elected governor of Rhode Island Tuesday night before a joint session of the House and Senate. The governor outlined his priorities for his first full term, including cutting taxes, improving education and expanding affordable housing. [Click here to see the full speech.](#)

- **Leader de la Cruz delivers Republican response to State of the State**

Senate Minority Leader Jessica de la Cruz (R-Dist. 23, North Smithfield, Burrillville, Glocester) delivered the Republican response to Gov. Daniel J. McKee's State of the State speech Tuesday night. Senator de la Cruz found agreement with the governor on the issues facing our state but offered her own solutions including larger tax cuts, greater oversight and expanding charter schools. [Click here to see the full speech.](#)

More...

- **Rep. Caldwell introduces universal free school lunch bill**
Rep. Justine Caldwell (D-Dist. 30, East Greenwich, West Greenwich) has introduced legislation to make school lunch free for all public school students in Rhode Island. The legislation ([2023-H 5141](#)) is aimed at ensuring that all students are well-fed so they can focus on learning at school, and to eliminate distinctions among children based on family income.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. McGaw introduces bill to prohibit new high-heat waste processing facilities**
Backed by 40 cosponsors, Rep. Michelle E. McGaw (D-Dist. 71, Portsmouth, Tiverton, Little Compton) has introduced legislation to prohibit any type of new high-heat waste processing facilities in Rhode Island. The legislation ([2023-H 5142](#)) is a response to efforts in Rhode Island and nationwide by the plastics industry to reclassify high-heat processing of plastic waste as manufacturing instead of waste management to exempt it from environmental protection laws and change the narrative about its products' environmental impacts.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Edwards bill would allow car inspections at R.I. stations only**
Rep. John G. Edwards (D-Dist. 70, Tiverton, Portsmouth) has introduced legislation ([2023-H 5034](#)) that would provide that only facilities located within Rhode Island be eligible for permits to operate as official inspection stations for the inspection of vehicles.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **School psychological services would be Medicaid-eligible under McNamara bill**
Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) has introduced legislation ([2023-H 5010](#)) that would direct that services provided by school social workers and certified school psychologists would be included as health care-related services eligible for federal Medicaid reimbursement.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. O'Brien introduces bill allowing retired teachers to help more in schools**
Rep. William W. O'Brien (D-Dist. 54, North Providence) introduced legislation ([2023-H 5040](#)) that would permit retired teachers to substitute teach in a school for up to 120 days in a school year, without any loss, forfeiture or reduction in retirement benefits. Currently, retired teachers are only allowed to substitute teach up to 90 days without jeopardizing their retirement benefits.
[Click here to see news release](#)
- **Rep. Morales introduces bill expanding Medicaid for seniors**
Rep. David Morales (D-Dist. 7, Providence) has introduced legislation increasing the income eligibility threshold for seniors to be eligible for Medicaid. The bill aims to help seniors pay for medical costs that Medicare does not cover such as prescriptions, dental care and vision by raising the eligibility cutoff to 138% of the federal poverty line (FPL). Rhode Islanders 65 or older currently lose Medicaid eligibility if they earn more than 100% FPL (\$13,590 for an individual, \$18,310 for a family of two).
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Martin Luther King Jr. Commission's annual celebration held in Providence**
The Martin Luther King Jr. State Holiday Commission, chaired by Rep. Raymond A. Hull (D-Dist. 6, Providence, North Providence), held its annual celebration of the life of the great civil rights leader at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Providence. The official holiday commemoration included remarks by commission members, state and religious leaders, several musical presentations, and a number of awards were presented.

-30-

For an electronic version of this and all press releases published by the Legislative Press and Public Information Bureau, please visit our website at rilegislature.gov