

Jan. 27, 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 <http://www.rilegislature.gov/pressrelease>



- **McNamara announces environmental bills at press conference**  
Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) hosted a press conference to announce a package of legislation to protect the state's rivers. This first bill ([2023-H 5087](#)) would require the Department of Environmental Management to develop a plan for flooding on the Pawtuxet River. The second bill ([2023-H 5088](#)) would amend the definition of solid waste to include abandoned PVC pipe. The third bill ([2023-H 5116](#)) would permit the DEM director to recognize and identify public rights-of-way to shoreline and water access over land owned by a private party.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Sen. Miller, Rep. Bennett bill would use Medicaid funds to aid homeless**  
Sen. Josh Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence) and Rep. David Bennett (D-Dist. 20, Warwick, Cranston) are sponsoring legislation ([2023 H-5098](#)) that would create a pilot program testing the effectiveness of using Medicaid waiver funds to provide the chronically homeless with housing. Advocates say the program will reduce homelessness and save the state money.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Tanzi introduces bill to ban smoking in casinos**  
Rep. Teresa Tanzi (D-Dist. 34, South Kingstown, Narragansett) has introduced legislation ([2023 H-5237](#)) to include casinos in the state's law prohibiting smoking in workplaces. Casinos are currently exempted from the 2004 Public Health and Workplace Safety Act, which workers and advocates say has a detrimental impact on casino workers.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)

More...

- **Cotter bill would establish limits on grocery self-checkouts**  
Rep. Megan L. Cotter (D-Dist. 39, Exeter, Hopkinton, Richmond) has introduced legislation ([2023-H 5161](#)) to establish limits on self-checkout lanes at grocery stores in Rhode Island. Representative Cotter said she introduced the bill out of concern for those who work as cashiers, and also for customers, many of whom benefit from the social interactions they have in the community with people like cashiers.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Sen. Lawson, Rep. Kazarian introduce bill to help local wineries**  
Sen. Valarie Lawson (D-Dist. 14, East Providence) and Rep. Katherine Kazarian (D-Dist. 63, East Providence, Pawtucket) have introduced legislation ([2023 S-0039](#), [2023 H-5232](#)) that would allow wineries to sell up to three five-ounce glasses and three 750-ml bottles per customer per day on site. Currently, only breweries and distilleries can sell their product onsite. This legislation would create parity for winemakers.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Potter introduces bill to promote solar, curb energy costs**  
Rep. Brandon Potter (D-Dist. 16, Cranston) has introduced legislation ([2023 H-5033](#)) to promote solar energy and tackle rising energy costs by improving the state's net metering program. The bill would alter the net metering regulations to allow some homeowners to put larger solar installations on their roofs and make other changes to the net metering system.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Sanchez introduces bill to raise minimum wage for teens**  
Rep. Enrique Sanchez (D-Dist. 9, Providence) has introduced legislation ([2023 H-5181](#)) that would require workers under 18 years of age to be paid at least the state's minimum wage. Under current state law, teenagers 14 or 15 years old who work less than 24 hours per week can be paid as low as 75% of the current minimum wage. Full-time students under 19 years of age who work at nonprofit religious, educational, library or community service organizations can be paid as low as 90%.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Solomon introduces legislation to lower state sales tax to 6%**  
Rep. Joseph J. Solomon, Jr. (D-Dist. 22, Warwick) has introduced legislation ([2023-H 5192](#)) that would lower the state's sales tax to 6%. The tax has been 7% since 1990.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senators and representatives remind short-term rental owners to register**  
Under legislation passed last year ([2021-H 5505A](#), [2021-S 0501B](#)), owners of short-term rentals are required to register their business. Statewide, about 68% of businesses have done so, according to data from airDNA. Senators Dawn Euer (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown) and Victoria Gu (D-Dist. 38, Charlestown, Westerly, South Kingstown) and Rep. Lauren H. Carson (D-Dist. 75, Newport) are urging those who haven't registered to do so.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Speaker Shekarchi hosts author Douglas Brinkley at State House**

At the invitation of Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick), author Douglas Brinkley gave a lecture at the State House on his 2022 book, *Silent Spring Revolution: John F. Kennedy, Rachel Carson, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, and the Great Environmental Awakening*. Brinkley is an author, history commentator for CNN, Presidential Historian for the New York Historical Society, and a contributing editor to Vanity Fair magazine.

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