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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>



- **Rep. McNamara bill would create program to redistribute unused medications**
Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) has introduced legislation that would create a way to redistribute unused medication to aid people who cannot access or afford their prescriptions. This act ([2022-H 7133](#)) would authorize the creation and implementation of a pharmaceutical redistribution program by the Department of Health and the Board of Pharmacy to begin on Jan. 1, 2023. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. McEntee introduces Plastic Waste Reduction Act**
The House Environment and Natural Resources Committee heard legislation introduced by Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee (D-Dist. 33, South Kingstown, Narragansett) that would reduce the use of plastic bags in retail establishments by offering recyclable bag options and providing penalties for violations. The Plastic Waste Reduction Act ([2022-H 7065](#)) would prohibit retail sales establishments from making available any single-use plastic checkout bag, and would require that any paper bags made available be recyclable, with an exception for paper carryout bags at restaurants. [Click here to see news release](#)
- **Sen. Lawson introduces bill eliminating sales tax on face masks**
Sen. Valarie J. Lawson (D-Dist. 14, East Providence) has introduced a bill that would eliminate the sales tax on cloth or disposable face masks and facial coverings. The legislation ([2022-S 2065](#)) would amend current state law by including cloth or disposable face masks and facial coverings sold at retail establishments to the general

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public under the “clothing” statute in the state’s tax laws. Rhode Island currently exempts sales tax on clothing and shoes up to \$250.

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- **Rep. Casimiro resolution would study effects of virtual learning**
Rep. Julie A. Casimiro (D-Dist. 31, North Kingstown, Exeter) has introduced a resolution ([2022-H 7118](#)) that would create a commission to study the effects and impacts of hybrid and virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic on the achievement rates of children in kindergarten through grade 12.
[Click here to see news release](#)

- **Voting Access Coalition launches ‘Let RI Vote’ campaign**
The RI Voting Access Coalition launched the “Let RI Vote” campaign in support of two pieces of election reform legislation. The Let RI Vote Act ([2022-H 7100](#), [2022-S 2007](#)), sponsored by House Majority Whip Katherine S. Kazarian (D-Dist. 63, East Providence) and Sen. Dawn Euer (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown), would make permanent the temporary pandemic-era policies which were enacted to keep voters and election administrators safe by expanding access to early voting and mail ballots. The group is also advocating for the Same-Day Voter Registration Resolution ([2022-H 7225](#)) sponsored by Rep. Nathan W. Biah (D-Dist. 3, Providence) and Sen. Alana M. DiMario (D-Dist. 36, Narragansett, North Kingstown), which would ask voters to approve a constitutional amendment allowing the General Assembly to create same-day voter registration.
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- **Bennett bills take aim at litter from nips, food packaging**
House Environment and Natural Resources Committee Chairman David A. Bennett (D-Dist. 20, Warwick, Cranston) has introduced two bills aimed at reducing waste and litter by prohibiting the sale of the miniature alcoholic beverages known as “nips” ([2022-H 7064](#)) as well as the use of disposable polystyrene foam food containers and plastic stirrers ([2022-H 7063](#)). Senate Health and Human Services Committee Chairman Joshua Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence) is sponsoring the bills ([2022-S 2140](#), [2022-S 2050](#)) in the Senate.
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Rep. Corvese bill would create open primaries**
Legislation sponsored by Rep. Arthur Corvese (D-Dist. 55, North Providence) would open up primary elections in Rhode Island to all candidates and voters, forging a new path for elections that would ensure that no candidate is elected to state or municipal offices without the support of a majority of their constituents. The bill ([2022-H 6622](#)) would replace the party primary with a “general primary” in which all declared candidates are listed, after which the top two vote-getters for each office, regardless of party, would face off in the general election.
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- **Rep. Place submits resolution to enforce 180-day limit on executive order**
Rep. David J. Place (R-Dist. 47, Burrillville, Glocester) has introduced a joint resolution ([2022-H 7217](#)) that would enforce a 2021 statute limiting state-of-emergency executive orders to 180 days. Gov. Dan McKee issued a COVID-related

executive order on Aug. 19, 2021. The resolution would acknowledge that the order would be terminated by Feb. 18, 2022, unless extended by action of the General Assembly.

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▪ **Rep. O'Brien reintroduces bill to repeal social gaming ban**

Rep. William W. O'Brien (D-Dist. 54, North Providence) has reintroduced his legislation ([2022-H 7193](#)) that would allow social gaming in private residences, public taverns, and private clubs. The bill would legalize activities such as Super Bowl "squares" and NCAA Basketball Tournament bracket "pools" as long as there is a social relationship between participants and no person other than the participants receives anything of value.

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▪ **Legislative leaders join announcement of settlement with opioid distributors**

House Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) and Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) joined Attorney General Peter F. Neronha and Governor Daniel J. McKee in announcing that Rhode Island would join the national opioid settlement with three major opioid distributors, which will provide over \$90 million in funding for state and local efforts to address Rhode Island's opioid crisis.

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