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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>



- **Speaker of the House appoints new committee chairs**

Speaker of the House K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) has appointed new committee chairs for the 2023-24 legislative term. [Rep. Arthur J. Corvese](#) (D-Dist. 55, North Providence) will chair the Committee on Labor. [Rep. Susan Donovan](#) (D-Dist. 69, Bristol, Portsmouth) will chair the Committee on Health and Human Services. [Rep. Stephen M. Casey](#) (D-Dist. 50, Woonsocket) will chair the Committee on Municipal Government and Housing. [Rep. Karen Alzate](#) (D-Dist. 60, Pawtucket, Central Falls) will chair the Committee on Special Legislation. [Rep. Jacquelyn M. Baginski](#) (D-Dist. 17, Cranston) will chair the Committee on Innovation, Internet and Technology.

- **Rep. Hull named House Deputy Speaker**

Rep. Raymond A. Hull (D-Dist. 6, Providence, North Providence) was appointed by Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) to the role of Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives. Representative Hull will be the first African American individual to serve as Rhode Island's Deputy Speaker. [Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Assault weapons ban introduced**

Legislation sponsored by Rep. Jason Knight (D-Dist. 67, Barrington, Warren) and Sen. Joshua Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence) would prohibit the sale or possession of assault weapons in Rhode Island. The legislation ([2023-H 5300](#)) would define assault weapons and prohibit them from being manufactured, sold, transferred or possessed in the state, with exceptions for current owners who comply with new requirements to either register them with police or render the weapon inoperable.

More...

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- **Ajello introduces Lila Sapinsley Compassionate Care Act**
Rep. Edith H. Ajello (D-Dist. 1, Providence) has introduced legislation aimed at allowing terminally ill Rhode Islanders to end their suffering on their own terms. The Lila Manfield Sapinsley Compassionate Care Act ([2023-H 5210](#)) would guarantee a terminal patient's right to choose to hasten the end of their lives under certain conditions, and legally protect health care providers who provide a prescription to them. Sen. Meghan E. Kallman (D-Dist. 15, Pawtucket, Providence) has introduced the bill ([2023-S 0126](#)) in the Senate.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Carson introduces bill prohibiting, penalizing contaminated construction fill**
After a contractor used hazardous materials on the Route 6/10 connector redevelopment project in Providence, Rep. Lauren H. Carson (D-Dist. 75, Newport) has introduced legislation ([2023-H 5107](#)) specifically making it a felony to use hazardous waste as fill.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **McNamara's Hope Scholarship would open doors to higher education**
Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) has introduced the Rhode Island Hope Scholarship Pilot Program Act ([2023-H 5009](#)) in an effort to increase the number of students enrolling in and obtaining degrees in a timely fashion from Rhode Island College and to promote more graduates in high-need fields and the trades. Similar legislation ([2023-S 0077](#)) has been introduced in the Senate by Senate Majority Leader Ryan W. Pearson (D-Dist. 19, Cumberland, Lincoln).
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate Minority Caucus submits legislation to reduce state sales tax to 5%**
Senate Minority Leader Jessica de la Cruz (R-Dist. 23, North Smithfield, Burrillville, Glocester) has introduced legislation ([2023-S 0076](#)) cosponsored by the entire Senate Minority Caucus to reduce Rhode Island's sales tax from 7 to 5%.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Bennett bills would cap physical therapy copays, support surgeons**
Rep. David Bennett (D-Dist. 20, Warwick, Cranston) has introduced legislation ([2023 H-5012](#)) that would cap copays for physical therapy appointments. Representative Bennett, a registered nurse, says patients who cannot afford physical therapy end up reinjuring themselves. He has also introduced a bill ([2023 H-5014](#)) that would allow for the state to certify surgical first assistants to help surgeons struggling with short staffing.
[Click here to see media release.](#)
- **Rhode Island Black and Latino Caucus gets a new name**
Sen. Jonathon Acosta (D-Dist. 16, Central Falls, Pawtucket) and Rep. Leonela Felix (D-Dist. 61, Pawtucket) have announced the formation of the Rhode Island Black, Latino, Indigenous, Asian-American and Pacific Islander Caucus, formerly known as the Rhode Island Legislative Black and Latino Caucus. Potential name changes and a

new set of bylaws were submitted and voted on by the caucus members at a recent meeting.

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

▪ **Caucus celebrates Black History Month**

The Rhode Island Black, Latino, Indigenous, Asian-American and Pacific Islander Caucus held its annual Black History Month celebration Wednesday in the Bell Room of the State House. The event was a celebration of Black culture, natural hair, and the contributions of Black Rhode Islanders to the state's history, culture and commerce. Attending the event were more than 20 Black-owned businesses.

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