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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>



- **Senate OKs Nursing Home Staffing and Quality Care Act**
The Senate approved the Nursing Home Staffing and Quality Care Act ([2021-S 0002](#)) sponsored by Senate Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence) to protect the health care of Rhode Islanders by setting standards for nursing home care. The bill, which is intended to address an ongoing crisis in nursing home staffing exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, now goes to the House, where Rep. Scott A. Slater (D-Dist. 10, Providence) is sponsoring a companion bill ([2021-H 5012](#)). [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. McNamara bill would ban animal importation for canned hunting**
The House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources heard legislation ([2021-H 5058](#)) introduced by Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) that would ban the practice of importing non-native animals into the state for the purpose of canned hunting. Canned hunting is a hunt that occurs in a confined area where the animal cannot escape, increasing the hunter’s chances of success. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. O’Brien reintroduces bill to repeal social gaming ban**
Rep. William W. O’Brien (D-Dist. 54, North Providence) has reintroduced his legislation ([2021-H 5399](#)) that would allow social gaming in private residences, public taverns and private clubs. Representative O’Brien’s 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. [Click here to see news release.](#)

More...

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

Speaker of the House K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) appointed several new committee chairs, including Rep. Camille F.J. Vella-Wilkinson (D-Dist. 21, Warwick), Conduct Committee; Rep. Joseph J. Solomon Jr. (D-Dist. 22, Warwick), Corporations Committee; Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston), Education Committee; Rep. Stephen M. Casey (D-Dist. 50, Woonsocket), Health and Human Services Committee; Rep. Deborah Ruggiero (D-Dist. 74, Jamestown, Middletown), Innovation, Internet and Technology Committee; Rep. Raymond A. Hull (D-Dist. 6 Providence, North Providence), Municipal Government and Housing Committee; Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee (D-Dist. 33, Narragansett, South Kingstown), Small Business Committee; Rep. Kathleen A. Fogarty (D-Dist. 35, South Kingstown), Special Legislation Committee; and Rep. Evan Patrick Shanley (D-Dist. 24, Warwick), State Government and Elections Committee.

[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Representatives Edwards, Fellela named to newly created leadership positions**

Rep. John G. Edwards (D-Dist. 70, Tiverton, Portsmouth) was named to the newly created position of Majority Floor Manager, where he will help to manage House floor sessions. Rep. Deborah A. Fellela (D-Dist. 43, Johnston) was named Senior Deputy Majority Leader, where she will run the newly created first-term Legislator Mentorship Program that will connect incoming legislators with more experienced members.

[Click here to see Edwards release.](#)
[Click here to see Fellela release.](#)
- **Governor gives farewell State of the State address**

Gov. Gina M. Raimondo held her sixth State of the State address on Wednesday. Due to COVID-19 prevention measures, the address was held in the House chamber with only the governor's family, two staffers, House Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) and Senate President Dominick J. Ruggiero (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) in attendance. The address was broadcast virtually throughout the state. Senate Minority Whip Jessica de la Cruz (R-Dist. 23, North Smithfield Burrillville, Gloucester,) gave the Republican response to the address.
- **Rhode Island leaders voice support for Question 2**

A coalition of community partners from throughout Rhode Island, including legislative leaders and environmental and labor organizations, kicked off a campaign in support of the 2021 Beach, Clean Water, and Green Bond. The \$74 million bond will appear as Question 2 on the ballot for Rhode Island's March 2 special election and gives voters the opportunity to approve major investments in clean water, state beaches and parks, outdoor recreation, farmland and forested land, and community resilience to climate change.

[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Sen. Valverde, Rep. Caldwell oppose medical waste burning proposal**

Sen. Bridget G. Valverde (D-Dist. 35, East Greenwich, North Kingstown, South Kingstown, Narragansett) and Rep. Justine A. Caldwell (D-Dist. 30, East Greenwich, West Greenwich) are strongly opposing a proposal to build a medical waste treatment

plant on the East Greenwich-West Warwick border. MedRecycler-RI Inc. is seeking approval to construct a facility that plans to accept 70 tons of medical waste daily from across New England and burn it at extreme temperatures through a process called “pyrolysis,” which turns the waste into energy and oil and tar byproducts. [Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **Henry Kinch Jr. named Executive Director of JCLS**

Henry Kinch Jr. has been chosen as the executive director of the Joint Committee on Legislative Services, which is responsible for the overall financial and administrative functions of the General Assembly.

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