

Feb. 9, 2024

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>



- **General Assembly passes bill to permanently allow outdoor dining**  
The General Assembly passed legislation ([2024-H 7064A](#), [2024-S 2028A](#)) sponsored by Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee (D-Dist. 33, South Kingstown, Narragansett) and Sen. Alana M. DiMario (D-Dist. 36, Narragansett, North Kingstown, New Shoreham) that permanently allows outdoor dining at restaurants. Municipalities would have the power to regulate the scope of the dining areas. The legislation now heads to the governor.  
[Click here to see news release](#)
- **House OKs Fellela bill imposing penalties for death from overmedication**  
The House of Representatives gave its approval to legislation ([2024-H 7013A](#)) introduced by Rep. Deborah A. Fellela (D-Dist. 43, Johnston) that would impose a probationary period of three years for any licensee found guilty of overprescribing with death resulting. A subsequent violation during the probationary period could result in a suspension or revocation of licensure. The measure now moves to the Senate for consideration.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **House, Senate oversight committees to delve into Washington Bridge crisis**  
A joint meeting of the House Committee on Oversight and the Senate Committee on Rules, Government Ethics and Oversight is planned for next week to address the ongoing crisis on the Washington Bridge, the causes of its failure, and plans for its future. The committee will meet Monday at 3 p.m. in Room 35 on the first floor of the State House.  
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More...

- **Legislators join opening of new Rhode Island Reconnect Center**  
Rep. Cherie L. Cruz (D-Dist. 58, Pawtucket) and Sen. Sandra Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket) joined Gov. Dan McKee and Rhode Island Postsecondary Commissioner Shannon Gilkey to open the new location of the RI Reconnect visitor center, a place for students and prospective students to receive support in breaking down barriers to pursuing their education and completing their degree. Reconnect has seen a surge in activity due to an \$8 million investment passed by the General Assembly.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. O'Brien introduces tax relief bill for seniors**  
Rep. William W. O'Brien (D-Dist. 54, North Providence) has introduced a bill which will grant senior citizens significant tax relief on pension and annuity income. The legislation ([2024-H 7485](#)) would allow a modification for all taxable pension and/or annuity income includible in federal adjusted gross income for tax years beginning on or after Jan. 1, 2025.  
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- **DiPalma and Serpa hold press conference highlighting APRA reform legislation**  
Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Little Compton, Newport, Tiverton) and Rep. Patricia A. Serpa (D-Dist. 27, West Warwick, Coventry) held a press conference to introduce legislation ([2024-S 2256](#), [2024-H 7181](#)) that would reform the Access to Public Records Act (APRA). Chairman DiPalma's legislation has been referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee and Chairwoman Serpa's bill has been referred to the House Committee on State Government and Elections.  
[Click here to see news release](#)
- **Groups rally for anti-gun violence legislation at State House**  
The Rhode Island Coalition Against Gun Violence, Rhode Island AFL-CIO, National Education Association Rhode Island, Moms Demand Action and other community organizations rallied at the State House in support of gun safety legislation and preventing gun violence. The coalition's priorities are a secure storage bill ([2024-H 7373](#), [2024-S 2202](#)) sponsored by Rep. Justine A. Caldwell (D-Dist. 30, East Greenwich, West Greenwich) and Sen. Pamela J. Lauria (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence) and an assault weapons ban ([2024-H 7217](#)) sponsored by Rep. Jason Knight (D-Dist. 67, Barrington, Warren) and Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Little Compton, Newport, Tiverton).
- **AARP backs bills**  
AARP Rhode Island announced its legislative priorities for 2024, which include the Secure Choice Program ([2024-H 7121](#), [2024-S 2045](#)) sponsored by Rep. Evan P. Shanley (D-Dist. 24, Warwick, East Greenwich) and Sen. Meghan E. Kallman (D-Dist. 15, Pawtucket, Providence) creating a voluntary retirement savings plan for individuals who do not have access through their employer; legislation to encourage construction of accessory dwelling units ([2024-H 7062](#)) sponsored by Rep. June S. Speakman (D-Dist. 69, Warren, Bristol) and Sen. Victoria Gu (D-Dist. 38, Charlestown, Westerly, South Kingstown); bills to eliminate the state tax on Social Security benefits ([2024-S 2058](#), [2024-S 2158](#), [2024-S 2061](#)) sponsored by Sen. Walter S. Felag (D-Dist. 10 Warren, Bristol, Tiverton), Sen. Mark P. McKenney (D-

Dist. 30, Warwick and Sen. Elaine J. Morgan (R-Dist. 34, Hopkinton, Charlestown, Exeter, Richmond, West Greenwich); and legislation to expand Temporary Caregiver Insurance ([2024-S 2121](#), [2024-H 7171](#)) sponsored by Sen. Valarie J. Lawson (D-Dist. 14, East Providence) and Rep. Joshua J. Giraldo (D-Dist. 56, Central Falls).

- **DiMario named Legislator of the Year at Clean Water Legislative Summit**  
The Rhode Island Clean Water Association honored Sen. Alana M. DiMario (D-Dist. 36, North Kingstown, Narragansett, New Shoreham) as its 2024 Clean Water Legislator of the Year at the 2024 Clean Water Legislative Summit. The summit included remarks from Rhode Island’s federal delegation and House Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick).  
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- **Economic Progress Institute hosts policy briefing on predatory lending**  
The Economic Progress Institute hosted a policy briefing on payday lending practices in Rhode Island for legislators, staffers and members of the public. The group was invited by Rep. Karen Alzate (D-Dist. 60, Pawtucket, Central Falls), who has introduced legislation ([2024-H 7211](#), [2024-S2141](#)) along with Sen. Ana B. Quezada (D-Dist. 2, Providence) to close an exemption in state law that allows payday lenders to charge triple-digit interest rates.  
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