

Feb. 11, 2022

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>



- **Assembly approves bills to boost RI's restaurant industry**
The General Assembly approved and sent to the governor two bills to assist the restaurant industry. Legislation ([2022-S 2153aa](#), [2022-H 7209A](#)) sponsored by Senate President Pro Tempore Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick) and Rep. Jacquelyn Baginski (D-Dist. 17, Cranston) will permanently allow restaurants and brewpubs to sell wine, beer and mixed drinks with takeout food orders. A second bill ([2022-H 7095](#), [2022-S 2134](#)) sponsored by Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee (D-Dist. 33, South Kingstown, Narragansett) and Sen. Alana M. DiMario (D-Dist. 36, Narragansett, North Kingstown) provides protections to allow restaurants to continue approved outdoor dining during the pandemic until April 1, 2023.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Legislation will protect janitors, security staff in Rhode Island**
Rep. Grace Diaz (D-Dist. 11, Providence), Sen. Sandra Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket) and Rep. David Morales (D-Dist. 7, Providence) joined leaders of the 32BJ Service Employees International Union and affected workers at a State House event to highlight their legislation ([2022-H 7200](#)) to provide wage protections to janitorial and security workers employed through state contracts in Rhode Island.
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- **Ruggiero bill aims to expand broadband availability, affordability**
With Rhode Island poised to receive over \$200 million in federal funding for broadband expansion, House Innovation, Internet & Technology Committee Chairwoman Deborah Ruggiero (D-Dist. 74, Jamestown, Middletown) is urging passage of her legislation ([2022-H 7083](#)) to create a 12-member Broadband Council

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and establish a broadband administrator within the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation to better position Rhode Island to access federal funding, address issues of high-speed internet access, and leverage economic development opportunities.

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- **Bill would extend Medicare supplement policies to those eligible below 65**
House Speaker Pro Tempore Brian Patrick Kennedy (D-Dist. 38, Hopkinton, Westerly) and Senate Minority Leader Dennis L. Algiere (R-Dist. 38, Charlestown, South Kingstown, Westerly) have introduced legislation ([2022-H 7244](#), [2022-S 2194](#)) that would require Medicare supplement policies in the state to be offered to all patients who are eligible for Medicare by reason of disability, including end-stage renal disease, regardless of age.
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- **Rep. Solomon, Sen. DiPalma bill would require bridge safety barriers**
Rep. Joseph J. Solomon Jr. (D-Dist. 22, Warwick) and Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Newport, Tiverton, Little Compton) are sponsoring legislation ([2022-H 7383](#)) that would require safety barriers or netting on the three bridges that connect Aquidneck and Conanicut islands to the Rhode Island mainland.
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- **Senate Republicans propose gas tax relief**
The Senate Republican caucus has introduced a proposal to eliminate the state gas tax in 2022 in an effort to provide relief to residents. The caucus proposes eliminating the gas tax – which is 35 cents per gallon – for the year 2022, saving Rhode Islanders \$150 million at the gas pump.
[Click here to see news release](#)
- **General Assembly extends governor’s emergency powers for 45 days**
In response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the House of Representatives and the Senate passed resolutions ([2022-H 7256A](#), [2022-S 2154A](#)) extending the governor’s emergency powers for another 45 days, ending on March 31. The emergency powers were set to expire on February 14. The resolutions were sponsored by House Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) and Senate President Dominick J. Ruggiero (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence).
- **House, Senate committees pass reapportionment legislation**
The Senate Judiciary Committee and the House Committee on State Government and Elections have passed legislation ([2022-S 2162A](#), [2022-H 7323A](#)) that would reapportion House, Senate and congressional districts. Both chambers are scheduled to consider the bills, which are sponsored by Sen. Stephen R. Archambault (D-Dist. 22, Smithfield, North Providence, Johnston) and Rep. Robert D. Phillips (D-Dist. 51, Woonsocket, Cumberland) on Tuesday, Feb. 15.
- **New PBS show to focus on official appetizer, interview with Rep. McNamara**
The third episode of a new PBS program, “RoadFood,” which aims to re-discover America’s regional culture through its iconic dishes, will feature Rhode Island and its official state appetizer, calamari. The show is set to air on Providence PBS affiliate, WSBE, on Monday, Feb. 14 at noon. The Valentine’s Day episode will feature an

interview with Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) who sponsored the legislation that gave calamari its official designation.

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