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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>



- **McEntee and DiMario’s outdoor dining bill signed into law**
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 has been signed into law by Gov. Dan McKee.
[Click here to see news release](#)
- **Bill to name Amica Pavilion media room after Bill Reynolds signed**
The General Assembly passed legislation ([2024-S 2034](#), [2024-H 7221](#)) introduced by Sen. Frank S. Lombardi (D-Dist. 26, Cranston) and Rep. Evan P. Shanley (D-Dist. 24, Warwick, East Greenwich) that would name the media work room in the Amica Mutual Pavilion in honor of Bill Reynolds, the beloved Providence Journal columnist who died in July 2023. Gov. Dan McKee signed the bill at a ceremony today in the media room.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **House OKs Rep. Speakman bill to boost ADU development**
The House of Representatives approved legislation ([2024-H 7062](#)) sponsored by Rep. June S. Speakman (D-Dist. 68, Warren, Bristol) to boost housing production by helping Rhode Islanders to develop accessory dwelling units, sometimes known as in-law apartments or granny flats, on their property. The bill now goes to the Senate.
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- **House, Senate oversight committees hear update on Washington Bridge crisis**
A joint meeting of the House Committee on Oversight and the Senate Committee on

More...

Rules, Government Ethics and Oversight convened to address the ongoing crisis on the Washington Bridge, the causes of its failure, and plans for its future. Peter Alвити, director of the Department of Transportation, gave a presentation and update on the bridge, along with other officials.

- **Community groups call for passage of bail reform legislation**
Advocates for justice reform rallied at the State House for passage of legislation sponsored by Rep. José Batista (D-Dist. 12, Providence) and Sen. Meghan E. Kallman (D-Dist. 15, Pawtucket, Providence) to reform a law that currently results in about 85% of those arrested for alleged probation violations being held without bail for weeks while awaiting a hearing. The legislators will be resubmitting an updated version of legislation they have sponsored ([2023-H 5571](#), [2023-S 0411](#)) to establish a presumption of release of those accused of probation violations while they await a hearing, and allow a judge to require reasonable bail only if necessary to ensure the defendant's appearance in court.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Cotter, Sen. DiPalma look to rescue land conservation funding**
Citing their effectiveness and Rhode Islanders' historically strong support of land conservation efforts, Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Little Compton, Newport, Tiverton) and Rep. Megan L. Cotter (D-Dist. 39, Exeter, Richmond, Hopkinton) have introduced legislation ([2024-H 7550](#)) to add \$16 million for land protection programs to the \$50 million environmental bond that Gov. Dan McKee has proposed for November's ballot.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Ackerman, Zurier bill would aid R.I. medical researchers, patients**
Deputy Majority Whip Mia A. Ackerman (D-Dist. 45, Cumberland, Lincoln) and Sen. Samuel D. Zurier (D-Dist. 3, Providence) have introduced legislation ([2024-H 7301](#), [2024-S 2394](#)) that will allow medical researchers in Rhode Island to participate in and gain access to vital national data and research. This would allow patients in Rhode Island, particularly those with cancer, access to the latest treatments and allow researchers to work on the cutting edge of their fields.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Boylan, Tikoian introduce bill to help law enforcement solve gun crimes**
Rep. Jennifer Boylan (D-Dist. 66, Barrington, East Providence) and Sen. David P. Tikoian (D-Dist. 22, Smithfield, Lincoln, North Providence) have introduced legislation ([2024-H 7216](#), [2024-S 2446](#)) to aid law enforcement in solving gun-related crimes by taking advantage of a national ballistics analysis database.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Legislative leaders talk economy with Chamber of Commerce**
House Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick), Senate Majority Leader Ryan W. Pearson (D-Dist. 19, Cumberland, Lincoln), House Majority Leader Christopher R. Blazejewski (D-Dist. 2, Providence), Senate Minority Leader Jessica de la Cruz (R-Dist. 23, North Smithfield, Burrillville, Glocester) and House Minority Leader Michael W. Chippendale (R-Dist. 40, Foster, Glocester, Coventry) joined the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce Thursday at its annual legislative

luncheon for a discussion on legislative matters, the state budget and the economy.

▪ **Ranked-choice voting demonstration results in sweet victory**

In a field of five chocolates, Ghirardelli Milk Chocolate Caramel won after four rounds of voting in a demonstration of ranked-choice voting staged by Rep. Rebecca Kislak (D-Dist. 4, Providence) and Senate Majority Whip Valarie Lawson (D-Dist. 14, East Providence) on Valentine's Day. Representative Kislak and Senator Lawson have introduced legislation ([2024-H 7540](#), [2024-S 2425](#)) to institute ranked-choice voting for presidential preference primaries, beginning with the 2028 presidential election.

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