

Feb. 17, 2023

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>



- **House passes O’Brien bill allowing retired teachers to help more in schools**  
The House of Representatives passed legislation ([2023-H 5040aa](#)) sponsored by Rep. William W. O’Brien (D-Dist. 54, North Providence) to permit retired teachers to substitute in a school for up to 120 days in a school year without any loss, forfeiture, or reduction in retirement benefits. The bill now heads to the Senate where Sen. Robert Britto (D-Dist. 18, East Providence, Pawtucket) has introduced similar legislation ([2023-S 0085](#)).  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Safe firearms storage is bare minimum for safety, sponsors say**  
Rep. Justine A. Caldwell (D-Dist. 30, East Greenwich, West Greenwich) and Sen. Pamela J. Lauria (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence) have introduced legislation ([2022-H 5434](#), [2023-S 0321](#)) to require that all firearms, when not in use by the owner or another authorized user, be stored in a locked container or equipped with a tamper-resistant mechanical lock or other safety device properly engaged in order to render the firearm inoperable. Massachusetts and Connecticut already have similar laws.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Whip Kazarian introduces bill to reduce power outages across Rhode Island**  
House Majority Whip Katherine S. Kazarian (D-Dist. 63, East Providence, Pawtucket) has introduced a bill ([2023-H 5656](#)) that would help reduce power outages and long-term energy system costs through the development of a more

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holistic, statewide approach toward managing vegetation that threatens electric grid reliability.

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- **Fogarty bill would stiffen penalties for attacks on electric grid, cell phone towers**  
Rep. Kathleen A. Fogarty (D-Dist. 35, South Kingstown) has introduced legislation ([2023-H 5364](#)) that would increase the criminal penalties on attacks to electric and cellular communication lines from \$3,000 to \$50,000; imprisonment from two years to 10 years, or both; and would require restitution for economic harm.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Shanley bill would allow nursing home residents to monitor their rooms**  
Rep. Evan P. Shanley (D-Dist. 24, Warwick, East Greenwich) has introduced legislation ([2023-H 5355](#)) that would allow nursing home residents to use electronic monitoring devices in their rooms or private living units, provided that the resident, as well as the resident's roommate, consent to such electronic monitoring in writing.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Sen. Kallman, Rep. Shanley hold press conference for retirement savings**  
Lawmakers and advocates held a press conference in support of legislation ([2023-S 0089](#), [2023-H 5417](#)) introduced by Sen. Meghan E. Kallman (D-Dist. 15, Pawtucket, Providence) and Rep. Evan P. Shanley (D-Dist. 24, Warwick, East Greenwich) that would allow workers to contribute up to 8% of their salary to individual savings accounts through payroll deductions, at no cost to their employers.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Sen. DiPalma, Rep. Tanzi look to Canada for lower prescription costs**  
Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Newport, Tiverton, Little Compton) and Rep. Teresa Tanzi (D-Dist. 34 South Kingstown, Narragansett) have introduced legislation to lower prescription drug costs. The first bill ([2023-S 0099](#), [2023-H 5430](#)) would create a wholesale drug importation program to directly import lower-cost drugs from Canada to be sold throughout Rhode Island. A second bill ([2023-S 0098](#), [2023-H 5431](#)) would cap prescription costs for the 250 costliest prescriptions at the level paid in Canada.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Sanchez introduces bill to recruit RIPTA drivers**  
Rep. Enrique G. Sanchez (D-Dist. 9, Providence) has introduced legislation ([2023-H 5525](#)) that would require the Governor's Workforce Board to work with RIPTA and the Division of Motor Vehicles to recruit and train bus drivers. The board would conduct an outreach campaign in diverse communities throughout the state to recruit applicants.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Vella-Wilkinson, Ujifusa introduce bill to make state websites ADA compliant**  
Rep. Camille Vella-Wilkinson (D-Dist. 21, Warwick) and Sen. Linda Ujifusa (D-Dist. 11, Portsmouth, Bristol) have introduced legislation ([2023 H-5106](#), [2023 S-0105](#)) to make the state's publicly available websites compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

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

- **Sweet victory: Peanut butter cups win ranked-choice chocolate election**  
Peanut butter cups won a decisive victory in a “chocolate election” staged by Rep. Rebecca Kislak (D-Dist. 4, Providence) and Sen. Valarie Lawson (D-Dist. 14, East Providence) as a demonstration of ranked-choice voting. The two legislators are the sponsors of legislation ([2023-H 5649](#), [2023-S 0322](#)) to institute ranked-choice voting for presidential preference primaries, beginning with the 2024 presidential election. [Click here to see news release.](#)

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