

April 26, 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>



- **House passes Serpa bill allowing independent voters to automatically disaffiliate**  
The House of Representatives passed legislation ([2024-H 7662](#)) introduced by Rep. Patricia A. Serpa (D-Dist. 27, West Warwick, Coventry) that would allow independent voters in primary elections to automatically disaffiliate. The measure now moves to the Senate, where similar legislation ([2024-S 2894](#)) has been introduced by Sen. Leonidas P. Raptakis (D-Dist. 33, Coventry, West Greenwich). [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate OKs Sosnowski bill to create Rhode Island Lake Management Program**  
The Senate passed legislation ([2024-S 2153A](#)) introduced by Sen. V. Susan Sosnowski (D-Dist. 37, South Kingstown) that would create the Rhode Island Lake Management Program, which would create a restricted receipt account to aid with lake and pond management issues relating to the control of invasive aquatic plants. The measure now moves to the House, where similar legislation ([2024-H 8093](#)) has been introduced by House Minority Leader Michael W. Chippendale (R-Dist. 40, Foster, Gloucester, Coventry). [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate approves Murray bill to prohibit declawing**  
The Senate approved legislation ([2024-S 2007](#)) sponsored by Sen. Melissa A. Murray (D-Dist. 24, Woonsocket, North Smithfield) to prohibit the declawing of cats in Rhode Island unless a licensed veterinarian has determined that the procedure is medically necessary. The measure now goes to the House, where Rep. William W. O'Brien (D-Dist. 54, North Providence) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2024-H](#)

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- **House passes Solomon bill to regulate pet insurance industry**  
The House of Representatives passed the Pet Insurance Act ([2024-H 7435](#)) introduced by Rep. Joseph J. Solomon Jr., which would create a comprehensive legal framework within which pet insurance may be sold in Rhode Island. The measure now moves to the Senate, where similar legislation ([2024-S 2812](#)) has been introduced by Sen. Jacob Bissaillon (D-Dist. 1, Providence).  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Ujifusa, Kislak introduce bills to protect independent local pharmacies**  
Sen. Linda Ujifusa (D-Dist. 11, Portsmouth, Bristol) and Rep. Rebecca Kislak (D-Dist. 4, Providence) have introduced a pair of bills to protect Rhode Island's independent pharmacies as well as consumer choice for prescription drugs. One bill ([2024-S 2395](#), [2024-H 7720](#)) would require pharmacy benefits managers (PBMs) to reimburse independent pharmacies using the national average drug acquisition cost or the average wholesale acquisition cost, plus a professional dispensing fee. The other ([2024-S 2605](#), [2024-H 8143](#)) would limit audits imposed by PBMs on independent pharmacies to one every 12 months unless there is suspicion of fraud or malfeasance.  
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- **Shekarchi resolution would give \$500,000 to Warwick for T.F. Green services**  
The House Finance Committee heard testimony on legislation ([2024 H-8181](#)) introduced by Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) that would provide an appropriation of \$500,000 to the City of Warwick for the compensation of municipal services rendered at Rhode Island T.F. Green International Airport.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Cano, Shallcross Smith highlight out-of-school learning funding bill**  
Sen. Sandra Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket) and Rep. Mary Ann Shallcross Smith (D-Dist. 46, Lincoln, Pawtucket) joined the Rhode Island Afterschool Network at a press conference at the State House to bring attention to legislation they introduced that would invest in out-of-school learning programs in the state. The bill ([2024-S 2864](#), [2024-H 8047](#)) would allocate \$4 million to support comprehensive and effective after-school, school vacation, summer learning and workforce development programs for students in grades kindergarten through 12 in Rhode Island's schools.  
[Click here to see news release](#)
- **Bill would protect patients from insurers' step therapy protocols**  
Sen. Linda Ujifusa (D-Dist. 11, Portsmouth, Bristol) and Rep. Michelle E. McGaw (D-Dist. 71, Portsmouth, Tiverton, Little Compton) are sponsoring legislation ([2024-S 2611](#), [2024-H 7822](#)) to rein in so-called step therapy protocols used by health insurers that can delay or prevent patients from getting tests, procedures and drugs ordered by their physicians. The bill prohibits insurers from requiring patients to try certain steps that have already failed for them, interfere with current therapies or prescriptions or would delay effective care.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Senators tour Meals on Wheels, introduce legislation to prescribe healthy meals**  
A group of senators toured the headquarters of Meals on Wheels Rhode Island to see its work and how it relates to legislation ([2024-S 2592](#)) sponsored by Sen. Victoria Gu (D-Dist. 38, Westerly, Charlestown, South Kingstown) to create a Medicaid pilot program to allow medical professionals to prescribe medically tailored meals and “produce by prescription.”  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
  
- **Senators Cano, Gallo host 11th annual Rhode Island Education Summit**  
Sen. Sandra Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket) and Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick) hosted the 11th annual Rhode Island Education Summit at the Community College of Rhode Island Warwick Campus. This year’s theme was “Accountability to Rhode Island Students: Measuring Success in Our Education System.” The summit had a panel discussion featuring Rhode Island Department of Education Commissioner Angélica Infante-Green, Ramona Santos Torres of Parents Leading for Educational Equity, John Papay of the Annenberg Institute, Michael DiBiase of the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council and a student.

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