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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>



- **Lawson elected President of the Rhode Island Senate**
The Rhode Island Senate elected Valarie J. Lawson (D-Dist. 14, East Providence) president, succeeding the late Dominick J. Ruggiero. Additionally, the Senate's Democratic Caucus elected Frank A. Ciccone III (D-Dist. 7, Providence, Johnston) as its majority leader, a post in which he succeeds Senator Lawson.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **House passes three bills from Speaker's housing package**
The House voted to approve three bills from the housing package supported by House Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick). The first ([2025-H 5793A](#)), sponsored by Rep. Arthur J. Corvese (D-Dist. 55, North Providence), would allow flexibility on the tax levy cap for communities when new housing is built, provided the new housing meets criteria including affordability requirements. The second ([2025-H 5794Aaa](#)), introduced by Rep. Robert E. Craven Sr. (D-Dist. 32, North Kingstown), seeks to clarify the processes set forth in the Zoning Enabling Act and Subdivision Act, and to correct issues that are creating unnecessary delays and red tape. The third ([2025-H 5795](#)), from Rep. Tina L. Spears (D-Dist. 36, Charlestown, New Shoreham, South Kingstown, Westerly), would allow those purchasing property to rely on the zoning certificates or opinions they receive from local officials.
[Click here for Corvese release.](#)
[Click here for Craven release.](#)
[Click here for Spears release.](#)
- **Cortvriend bill to test biosolids for PFAS approved by House**
The House approved legislation ([2025-H 5844A](#)) sponsored by Rep. Terri Cortvriend

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(D-Dist. 72, Portsmouth, Middletown) to require anyone applying for a permit to spread biosolids on land as fertilizer to first test the material for PFAS — per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances — and test them quarterly thereafter. The legislation stems from Maine’s discovery that soil, groundwater and farm products from dozens of farms there were contaminated by PFAS from decades of the use of biosolids — the solid material left over after sewage is treated — as fertilizer. The legislation now goes to the Senate where Sen. Alana M. DiMario (D-Dist. 36, Narragansett, North Kingstown, New Shoreham) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2025-S 0650](#)).| [Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **House OKs Serpa bill to prevent premium increases because of policy inquiries**

The House of Representatives gave its approval to legislation ([2025-H 5570A](#)) introduced by Rep. Patricia A. Serpa (D-Dist. 27, West Warwick, Coventry) that would prevent insurance companies from increasing a policyholder’s premium for asking about the terms of a policy. The measure now moves to the Senate where similar legislation ([2025-S 0084](#)) has been introduced by Sen. Leonidas P. Raptakis (D-Dist. 33, Coventry, West Greenwich). [Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **House approves Azzinaro bill that will protect veterans**

The House approved legislation ([2025-H 5043](#)) sponsored by Rep. Samuel A. Azzinaro (D-Dist. 37, Westerly) that would protect veterans filing for disability benefits with the Department of Veterans Affairs. The bill would provide protection and a cause of action to prevent unethical and improper conduct and collection of fees by a person advising or assisting any veteran filing a claim for disability benefits with the Department of Veterans Affairs. The legislation now heads to the Senate where Sen. Walter S. Felag Jr. (D-Dist. 10, Warren, Bristol, Tiverton) has introduced the companion bill ([2025-S 0071](#)). [Click here to see news release](#)

▪ **House OKs Cortvriend bill to preserve public rights of way**

The House approved legislation ([2025-H 5960](#)) sponsored by Rep. Terri Cortvriend (D-Dist. 72, Portsmouth, Middletown) to enable municipalities to abandon roads or paths they no longer wish to maintain for vehicular traffic but preserve a public easement on them that allows the public to access them by foot, bicycle or other means. While the bill would provide this option throughout the state, it would especially help in maintaining public access to the shore as climate change and flooding make it more challenging for municipalities to maintain some coastal roads. The bill now goes to the Senate where Sen. Victoria Gu (D-Dist. 38, Westerly, Charlestown, South Kingstown) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2025-S 0039](#)). [Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **Assembly names Sakonnet Bridge after Staff Sergeant Christopher Potts**

The General Assembly approved legislation ([2025-S 0591A](#), [2025-H 5051A](#)) sponsored by Sen. Walter S. Felag Jr. (D-Dist. 10, Warren, Bristol, Tiverton) and Rep. Samuel A. Azzinaro (D-Dist. 37, Westerly) that would rename the Sakonnet Bridge as the “Staff Sergeant Christopher Potts Sakonnet River Bridge.” Staff Sgt. Christopher Scott Potts of Tiverton served in the Rhode Island National Guard for over 14 years. He was deployed to Iraq in March 2004 and was tragically killed

during combat operations in Taji, Iraq, on Oct. 3, 2004, which was his birthday. The legislation now heads to the governor for consideration.

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- **Legislators unite across party lines to protect 340B discount drug program**
Legislation ([2025-H 5634](#)) sponsored by Rep. Jon D. Brien (I-Dist. 49, Woonsocket, North Smithfield) and cosponsored by Rep. Megan L. Cotter (D-Dist. 39, Exeter, Richmond, Hopkinton) and Rep. Marie Hopkins (R-Dist. 21, Warwick) would prohibit insurers, pharmacy benefits managers and other payors from engaging in discriminatory practices against community hospitals, clinics and other health care agencies that purchase prescriptions through the federal 340B discount program. Sen. Bridget Valverde (D-Dist. 35, North Kingstown, East Greenwich, South Kingstown) is sponsoring the bill ([2025-S 0114](#)) in the Senate.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Carson bill would create flood audit program for homes and business properties**
To help Rhode Islanders make their property more resilient to the effects of climate change, Rep. Lauren H. Carson (D-Dist. 75, Newport) is proposing a new flood audit program ([2025-H 6276](#)), similar to the state's existing energy efficiency audit program. The program would provide homeowners and businessowners with an inspection of their property by a team of trained professionals who would identify risks and potential improvements that could protect it from flood damage.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Burke appointed chairman of Senate Committee on Labor and Gaming**
Senate President Valarie J. Lawson (D-Dist. 14, East Providence) has appointed Sen. John P. Burke (D-Dist. 9, West Warwick) to serve as chairman of the Senate Committee on Labor and Gaming. He most recently served as vice chairman of the committee. Senator Burke replaces Senate Majority Leader Frank A. Ciccone III (D-Dist. 7, Providence, Johnston) who was recently elected to that position by the Democratic Caucus.
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