

April 4, 2015

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.rilin.state.ri.us/News/>



- **Rep. Kennedy calls for ‘bill of rights’ for electricity customers**  
Electric suppliers will have new guidelines to follow in their dealings with customers and potential customers, and consumers will have a clearer view of their rights in dealing with energy supply companies under legislation ([2015-H 5978](#)) introduced by Rep. Brian Patrick Kennedy (D-Dist. 38, Hopkinton, Westerly). The “Electric Supplier Consumer Bill of Rights” outlines company responsibilities and consumer rights in the recently more competitive energy marketplace.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
  
- **Legislation to allow opt out of PARCC testing heard in committee**  
The House Committee on Health, Education and Welfare this week heard testimony on legislation ([2015-H 5845](#)) giving parents and guardians of school children the right to have their children opt out of the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for Colleges and Careers (PARCC) assessments and tests. Sponsored by Rep. Gregg Amore (D-Dist. 65, East Providence), the bill calls on the Commissioner of Education to establish an opt-out procedure to be used statewide and directs schools to provide an alternative academic setting and activities for students who do not take the tests. A companion Senate bill ([2015-S 0736](#)), introduced by Sen. Adam J. Satchell (D-Dist. 9, West Warwick), is before the Senate Committee on Education.
  
- **Sen. Sosnowski bill banning casino smoking heard in committee**  
Senate Committee on Environment and Agriculture Chairwoman V. Susan Sosnowski’s (D-Dist. 37, New Shoreham, South Kingstown) bill ([2015-S 0287](#)) on banning smoking in casinos was heard before the Senate Committee on Special Legislation and Veterans’ Affairs. The bill would repeal the exemption for indoor

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smoking at both of Rhode Island's gaming facilities, Twin River Casino and Newport Grand.

- **House passes Rep. Costa's sex-trafficking bill**

Rep. Doreen M. Costa's (R-Dist. 31, North Kingstown, Exeter) sex-trafficking bill ([2015-H 5070](#)) was passed by the House of Representatives. The bill increases jail time for sex trafficking of a minor by 10 years and increases jail time for obstruction with enforcement of sex trafficking laws by 15 years. Sen. Elaine J. Morgan (R-Dist. 34, Hopkinton, Charlestown, Exeter, Richmond, West Greenwich) has introduced a companion bill ([2015-S 0123](#)) that passed the Senate Judiciary Committee. [Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Rep. Nardolillo bill would make it a crime to impersonate a veteran**

Rep. Robert A. Nardolillo III (R-Dist. 28, Coventry) has submitted legislation that would make "stolen valor" a crime. The bill ([2015-H 5999](#)) would make it a crime to fraudulently represent oneself as an active or inactive member of the military or armed forces for the purpose of obtaining money, property or other tangible benefits. The crime would be a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment of not more than a year, or a fine of \$1000, or both. [Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Rep. Kazarian bill banning pharmacy tobacco sales heard in committee**

Rep. Katherine S. Kazarian's (D-Dist. 63, East Providence) bill ([2015-H 5701](#)) was heard before the House Committee on Corporations. The bill would prohibit any business with a pharmacy on-site from selling tobacco products under the same roof.

- **Rep. McLaughlin bills look to limit annual utility rate increases**

Rep. James N. McLaughlin (D-Dist. 57, Cumberland, Central Falls) has submitted a resolution ([2015-H 5130](#)) that would create a commission to study the effectiveness of the PUC and two bills ([2015-H 5291](#), [2015-H 5294](#)) that would limit annual rate increases by electric companies and Verizon to 5 percent. [Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Rep. Costantino wants panel to study consolidation of municipal functions**

Rep. Gregory J. Costantino (D-Dist. 44, Lincoln, Smithfield, Johnston) has submitted a resolution ([2015-H 5532](#)) that would create a 17-member commission to study the consolidation of municipal and educational functions on a county or statewide level. The commission would be required to report back to the General Assembly no later than March 2, 2016. [Click here to see news release.](#)

- **House, Senate make appointments to Commission on Women**

Six state legislators are among those who will serve on the 26-member Rhode Island Commission on Women, a panel that Gov. Gina M. Raimondo is reviving with new members and a focus on pay equity. Named by Speaker of the House of Representatives Nicholas A. Mattiello are Rep. Doreen Marie Costa (R-Dist. 31, North Kingstown, Exeter), Rep. Joy Hearn (D-Dist. 66, Barrington, East Providence) and Rep. Mary Duffy Messier (D-Dist. 62, Pawtucket). Appointments announced by

President of the Senate M. Teresa Paiva Weed are Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick), Sen. Gayle L. Goldin (D-Dist. 3, Providence) and Sen. Elaine J. Morgan (R-Dist. 34, Charlestown, Exeter, Hopkinton, Richmond, West Greenwich).

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

▪ **Legislators among Coalition for Homeless honorees**

Sen. Elizabeth A. Crowley (D-Dist. 16, Central Falls, Pawtucket) and Rep. Scott A. Slater (D-Dist. 10, Providence) were among the individuals honored by the Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless during the 2015 Annual Awards Luncheon held this week. The two legislators received the Senator Jack Reed Advocacy Award for their efforts as members of the General Assembly to enact legislation to eliminate homelessness in the state, to secure funding for affordable housing and to improve the health and welfare of the state's homeless population.

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