

April 17, 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/>



- **Campaign finance reform bills heading to governor**

The General Assembly has approved legislation aimed at tightening campaign finance reporting laws. House Majority Leader John J. DeSimone's (D-Dist. 5, Providence) bill ([2015 H-5789A](#)) would require the filing of bank statements with the Board of Elections. Rep. Robert E. Craven's (D-Dist. 32, North Kingstown) bill ([2015-H 5840A](#)) would require separate campaign accounts. Rep. Joy Hearn's (D-Dist. 66, Barrington, East Providence) bill ([2015-H 5920A](#)) would require a treasurer. Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Michael J. McCaffrey's (D-Dist. 29, Warwick) bill ([2015-S 0681A](#)) combines and mirrors the three House bills. [Click here to see news release.](#)

- **House, Senate send casino hotel bill to governor**

The General Assembly has given final passage to legislation to clear the way for a hotel at the Twin River Casino in Lincoln. The bills now go to the governor for her action. Introduced in the House ([2015-H 5798](#)) by Rep. Jeremiah T. O'Grady (D-Dist. 46, Lincoln, Pawtucket) and in the Senate ([2015-S 0649A](#)) by Sen. Maryellen Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence), the legislation removes a prohibition against a hotel included in the 2005 public laws and ensures that construction will remain subject to Town of Lincoln zoning ordinances. Casino officials envision a 200-room hotel at a cost of between \$30 million and \$35 million. [Click here to see news release.](#)

More...

- **Senate passes sex trafficking, pandering bills**

The Senate approved legislation, introduced by Sen. Elaine J. Morgan (R-Dist. 34, Charlestown, Exeter, Hopkinton, Richmond, West Greenwich), increasing the penalties for those convicted of sex trafficking of minors. The bill ([2015-S 0123](#)) raises the potential prison time from the current 40-year maximum to 50 years. A companion House bill ([2015-H 5070](#)), sponsored by Rep. Doreen Marie Costa (R-Dist. 31, North Kingstown, Exeter), has already passed the House. The Senate passed a second bill introduced by Senator Morgan ([2015-S 0342](#)) to expand the definition of those guilty of pandering to or permitting prostitution to include the person in control of the premises where the prostitution occurs. Representative Costa is the sponsor of the House companion ([2015-H 5069](#)).

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

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

- **Senate passes bill toughening penalties for killing of animals**

The Senate passed legislation ([2015-S 0764](#)), sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Dominick J. Ruggiero (D-Dist. 4, Providence, North Providence), to increase the penalty — from two years to five years — for anyone found guilty of malicious treatment of or killing of an animal. It also sets an additional assessment of \$250 if the offense is committed in the presence of a child. A companion House bill ([2015-H 5466](#)), sponsored by Rep. William W. O'Brien (D-Dist. 54, North Providence), is before the House Committee on Judiciary.

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- **Sen. Goldin bills tighten pay equity law, prohibit familial status discrimination**

Sen. Gayle L. Goldin (D-Dist. 3, Providence) has submitted legislation ([2015-S 0721](#)) that would require employers to justify any salary differentials that exist based on bona fide factors other than sex, as well as a bill ([2015-S 0722](#)) that would provide protections against unfair employment practices to individuals based on their “familial status,” meaning a person who is providing care and support to a family member.

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- **Special legislative commission, lieutenant governor announce shared services bill**

Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Newport, Little Compton, Tiverton) and Rep. Robert D. Phillips (D-Dist. 51, Woonsocket, Cumberland), co-chairmen of the Joint Municipal Shared Services Study Commission, have announced legislation ([2015-S 0812](#)) ([2015-H 6063](#)) that clarifies that cities, towns, fire districts, school districts and other taxing authorities are permitted to enter into agreements to provide shared services.

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- **Bill puts life term on table in drunken driving deaths**

Legislation ([2015-H 6073](#)), introduced by Rep. Dennis M. Canario (D-Dist. 71, Portsmouth, Little Compton, Tiverton), would increase the potential penalty for individuals convicted of driving under the influence, death resulting, giving judges the latitude to imprison such offenders for life. The current maximum jail time is 15 years

for a first offense and 20 for a second or subsequent conviction.

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- **Paiva Weed, Rep. McNamara call for performance-based funding for colleges**
Legislation to establish performance-based funding for Rhode Island's institutions of higher education was heard by the Senate Committee on Education. Introduced by President of the Senate M. Teresa Paiva Weed (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown), the legislation ([2015-S 0603](#)) would establish a performance-based funding component to state aid. Chairman of House Committee on Health, Education and Welfare Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist.19, Warwick, Cranston) submitted [2015-H 5792](#), which will be heard by the House Committee on Health, Education and Welfare on April 29.
- **House Judiciary Committee hears bills on weapons, domestic violence**
The House Committee on Judiciary heard several bills this week relating to firearms and those convicted of domestic violence crimes. Before a packed committee room on Tuesday, April 14, the committee heard three separate bills that would prevent anyone who has been convicted of a domestic violence crime from being able to purchase or own a firearm.
- **Sen Goldin, Rep. Regunberg call for early voting, electronic registration**
Sen. Gayle L. Goldin (D-Dist. 3, Providence) and Rep. Aaron Regunberg (D-Dist. 4, Providence) have introduced mirroring bills that establish in-person early voting and electronic registration of voters, prohibit the casting of emergency mail ballots at the local boards of canvassers and specify methods of delivery to the state board of elections. Representative Regunberg's bill ([2015-H 6051](#)) was heard by the House Committee on Judiciary and Senator Goldin's bill ([2015-S 0821](#)) was referred to the Senate Committee on Judiciary.

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