

Feb. 13, 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/>



- **Assembly leadership speaks to Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce**
General Assembly leadership, including Speaker of the House Nicholas A. Mattiello, President of the Senate M. Teresa Paiva Weed, House Majority Leader John J. DeSimone (D-Dist. 5, Providence), House Minority Leader Brian C. Newberry (R-Dist. 48, Burrillville, North Smithfield), Senate Minority Leader Dennis L. Algieri (R-Dist. 38, Westerly, Charlestown, South Kingstown) and Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Roger A. Picard (D-Dist. 20, Woonsocket, Cumberland) attended a lunch sponsored by the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce to speak about pro-business legislation and field questions about tax relief.
- **Bill would eliminate subminimum wage for tipped workers**
Rep. Aaron Regunberg (D-Dist. 4, Providence) and Sen. Gayle L. Goldin (D-Dist. 3, Providence) have introduced legislation to raise Rhode Island’s subminimum wage for tipped workers for the first time in nearly 20 years. The legislation ([2015-H 5364](#)) and ([2015-S 0291](#)) would gradually raise the state’s tipped minimum wage from its current rate of \$2.89 per hour until it is in line with Rhode Island’s regular minimum wage by the year 2020.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Sen. Metts reintroduces “Community–Police Relationship Act”**
Sen. Harold M. Metts (D-Dist. 6, Providence) has again this year introduced legislation, “The Comprehensive Community–Police Relationship Act,,” with the goal of improving relations between state residents and law enforcement. The bill ([2015-S 0269](#)) will require all police departments to submit annual reports indicating what action has been taken to address any racial disparities in traffic stops and/or

More...

searches documented in previous reports.

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- **Bill gives college grads a two-year breather repaying student loans**
Legislation ([2015-H 5226](#)) introduced by Rep. K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) is aimed at helping new graduates deal with their student loan debt. Under the “Get On Your Feet Loan Forgiveness Program,” the state will pay the difference between what graduates are paying through the federal Pay As You Earn (PAYE) repayment program and the total loan repayment amount for the first two years after graduation. It will apply to Rhode Island residents who graduate from in-state institutions.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Sen. Felag bill bars airport access fees on certain services**
Off-airport parking facilities (parking lots, rental firms) which have entered into an agreement with the Rhode Island Airport Corporation are allowed to charge their customers a 12 percent airport access fee (payable to RIAC), including for services (auto detailing, general maintenance) that are unrelated to airport access. Sen. Walter S. Felag Jr. (D-Dist. 10, Warren, Bristol, Tiverton) has introduced legislation ([2015-S 0165](#)) to exempt unrelated, ancillary services from the 12 percent fee.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Legislation seeks higher payment to towns from daily beach parking fees**
Sen. James C. Sheehan (D-Dist. 36, Narragansett, North Kingstown) has introduced legislation ([2015-S 0226](#)) to increase the percentage of daily beach parking fees payable to the city or town in which the beach is located from the current 16 percent of total daily parking revenue to 20 percent. With season pass sales up and daily parking fees down the past few years, communities with beaches have seen a decrease in their cut from the state because they receive no share of the season pass revenues.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Speaker Mattiello honored at NRI Chamber annual dinner**
Speaker of the House of Representatives Nicholas A. Mattiello (D-Dist. 15, Cranston) received the Barbara C. Burlingame Award during the Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce annual dinner. The award, named in honor of former state Representative Burlingame, was presented to Speaker Mattiello for spearheading the creation of a new Economic Development Council, for being instrumental in the drive to reduce the state’s corporate tax rate and for supporting estate tax reform.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Melo proposes doubling tax deduction for college savings**
Rep. Helio Melo (D-Dist. 64, East Providence) has introduced a bill ([2015-H 5113](#)) that would double the deduction from the state income tax for contributions to the state’s tuition savings program, from \$500 to \$1,000 for individual filers and from \$1,000 to \$2,000 for those filing jointly. The measure is designed to encourage families to save for college as the costs continue to rise, and to provide greater relief to families doing their best to save in a difficult economy.

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

- **Cote bill would give veteran-owned businesses a leg-up on state contracts**
Sen. Marc A. Cote (D-Dist. 24, Woonsocket, North Smithfield) has introduced legislation designed to boost employment and business opportunities for veterans in Rhode Island. The bill ([2015-S 0140](#)) would give veteran-owned small businesses a preference in the state purchasing process, akin to the benefit that is awarded women-owned and minority-owned businesses. The legislation would require that at least 3 percent of the total value of all state contracts available to businesses in each fiscal year be awarded to those owned by veterans.
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Senate Republican Caucus asks to reopen I-95 Welcome Center**
The Rhode Island Senate Republican caucus has asked the Department of Transportation and the new Secretary of Commerce to investigate the feasibility of reopening the I-95 North Welcome Center in Richmond. In a letter to DOT Director Michael P. Lewis and Secretary of Commerce Stefan Pryor, the caucus noted that reopening the center would be a positive step in bolstering the Ocean State's image as business- and tourist-friendly.
[Click here to see news release.](#)