

Feb. 27, 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/>



- **Bill would disarm domestic violence convicts, those with restraining orders**
Sen. Cynthia A. Coyne (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence) and Rep. Teresa A. Tanzi (D-Dist. 34, Narragansett, South Kingstown) have introduced legislation that would take firearms out of the hands of perpetrators of domestic violence. The bill, which has been introduced in both the House ([2015-H 5655](#)) and Senate ([2015-S 0503](#)), amends an existing law by compelling courts to order the surrender of firearms. It also adds language that would prevent a restrained person from purchasing, receiving, or attempting to purchase or receive a firearm while the restraining order is in effect.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Sen. Gallo, Rep. McNamara bills ease access to online higher ed programs**
Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) and Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick) have introduced legislation in their respective chambers to provide easier access to online higher education learning programs. The legislation ([2015-H 5578](#) and [2015-S 0455](#)) sets standards for “distance learning” in Rhode Island and gives the Commissioner of Postsecondary Education the authority to enter into the States Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) with other states and the various higher educational institutions that are part of the agreement.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Sen. O’Neill wants financial literacy to be part of school curriculum**
Sen. Edward J. O’Neill (I-Dist. 17, Lincoln, North Providence) has introduced legislation that would give students a leg up in understanding how the financial world

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works. The bill ([2015-S 0401](#)) would require the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop curricular material on financial literacy. The material and guidelines would include how money works in the world, how someone earns it, how it's managed, how it can be invested and how it can be donated to help others. [Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Rep. Serpa, Sen. Raptakis introduce bills to eliminate commercial fuel tax**
Rep. Patricia Serpa (D-Dist. 27, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick) has submitted two bills to exempt commercial heating fuel from state taxes. The first bill ([2015-H 5522](#)) would exempt fuel oil, propane and natural gas for heating by commercial establishments from state taxes. Sen. Leonidas P. Raptakis (D-Dist. 33, Coventry, East Greenwich, West Greenwich) has introduced an identical bill ([2015-S 0107](#)) in the Senate. Representative Serpa's second bill ([2015-H 5281](#)) is similar to the first, except that it would limit the exemption to fuel oil only. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Craven sponsors comprehensive sex offender bill**
Rep. Robert E. Craven (D-Dist. 32, North Kingstown), in conjunction with the Office of the Attorney General, has introduced legislation ([2015-H 5456](#)) to enact the Sexual Offender Registration and Community Notification Act (SORNA), striking some existing language in state law and replacing it with language to put Rhode Island into compliance with the provisions of the federal Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **General Assembly celebrates black history, Dominican independence**
The sixth annual Joint Legislative Black History Month Heritage Celebration was held Wednesday in the Senate chamber. The event was sponsored jointly by the Rhode Island General Assembly and the Rhode Island Black & Latino Caucus. The General Assembly also marked its annual celebration of Dominican independence Thursday with a celebration and the display of the flag of the Dominican Republic in both chambers. This year marks the 171st anniversary of Dominican independence.
- **Rep. Solomon proposes Rocky Point specialty license plates**
Rep. Joseph J. Solomon Jr. (D-Dist. 22, Warwick)) has introduced legislation ([2015-H 5570](#)) to create a special Rocky Point license plate. Proceeds from the plate would benefit the Rocky Point Foundation Inc., a nonprofit advocacy organization that is trying to preserve and protect the natural and historic heritage and environment of the land formerly occupied by the Rocky Point Amusement Park in Warwick. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Bill calls for white collar crime unit in AG's office**
Legislation has been sponsored by Rep. Michael J. Marcello (D-Dist. 41, Scituate, Cranston), at the request of the Attorney General, to codify in law the public corruption and white collar crime unit within the AG's office. Under the legislation ([2015-H 5468](#)), the white collar crime unit will be charged with investigating and prosecuting cases of abuse of the public trust. [Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Legislation seeks funding for emergency housing assistance**
Rep. Scott A. Slater (D-Dist. 10, Providence) and Sen. Frank S. Lombardi (D-Dist. 26, Cranston) have introduced bills ([2015-H 5512](#), [2015-S 0307](#)) to create an emergency housing assistance fund to be administered by the Department of Human Services in conjunction with community action program agencies. The General Assembly, under the legislation, would annually appropriate sufficient amounts to fund the program to address homelessness in the state.
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Rep. Ruggiero calls for tax relief for startup companies**
Rep. Deborah Ruggiero (D-Dist. 74, Jamestown, Middletown) has proposed legislation that would give startup businesses a break by suspending the minimum corporate tax for the first three years of a business's existence. The bill ([2015-H 5058](#)) would add an exception to the tax for the first three years a corporation is in business in Rhode Island.
[Click here to see news release.](#)