

Jan. 9, 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/>.



- **Mattiello unanimously elected Speaker of the House**
The members of the House of Representatives unanimously elected Rep. Nicholas A. Mattiello (D-Dist. 15, Cranston) Speaker of the House on the first day of session. Following the election, Speaker Mattiello addressed the chamber, making job creation and economic development central to this session's agenda.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Paiva Weed unanimously elected President of the Senate**
The members of the Senate unanimously elected Sen. Teresa Paiva Weed (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown) President of the Senate on the first day of session. Following the election, President Paiva Weed spoke about her education-focused job-creation initiatives for the upcoming session.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **House, Senate bills call for tax relief for retirees**
Bills to be considered in both the House and Senate propose to bring tax relief to the state's retirees by exempting from state income tax their pension income and/or Social Security benefits. The House bill ([2015-H 5000](#)) introduced by Rep. Robert E. Craven (D-Dist. 32, North Kingstown) would extend the tax exemption to Social Security benefits and income from a broad assortment of pension plans. The Senate bill being introduced by Sen. Edward J. O'Neill (I-Dist. 17, Lincoln, North Providence, North Smithfield) would apply the exemption to Social Security benefits.
[Click here to see House release.](#)
[Click here to see Senate release.](#)

More...

- **Ethics Commission amendment to be reintroduced in Senate**
Buoyed by the first act of newly inaugurated Gov. Gina Raimondo – an executive order calling for ethics and integrity in state government – Sen. James C. Sheehan (D-Dist. 36, Narragansett, North Kingstown) announced he will reintroduce legislation to put a constitutional amendment question before voters, establishing the makeup and powers of the Ethics Commission and specifically its authority over members of the General Assembly.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Legislation would amend qualifications for DCYF director**
Legislation introduced in the House ([2015-H 5016](#)) by Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) seeks to amend the qualifications necessary for the director of the Department of Children, Youth and Families. The legislation would require that the new director possess a master’s degree and/or doctoral degree but would eliminate the requirement that the degree(s) be specifically in social work or a closely related field.
- **Ackerman opens dialogue on college sexual assault**
In an effort to open a dialogue on the growing problem of sexual assault at colleges and universities, Rep. Mia Ackerman (D-Dist. 45, Cumberland, Lincoln) introduced legislation ([2015-H 5034](#)) that would require institutions of higher education to report allegations of sexual assault to law enforcement agencies.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Corvese reintroduces bill targeting SNAP benefits misuse**
Rep. Arthur J. Corvese (D-Dist. 55, North Providence) has reintroduced his legislation ([2015-H 5018](#)) aimed at preventing misuse of the food assistance program by banning the use of electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards for the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) at establishments that specialize in products aimed at adults, like liquor stores.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **House Minority Caucus takes aim at RhodeMap RI plan**
Led by House Minority Leader Brian C. Newberry (R-Dist. 48, North Smithfield, Burrillville), members of the minority caucus have announced their intent to sponsor legislation freeing municipalities from having to incorporate the RhodeMap RI plan into their own comprehensive plans. Leader Newberry said that the plan, approved by the Statewide Planning Council, has raised concerns in some communities about the impact it may have on local comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate committees explore state health insurance exchange trends**
The Senate Finance Committee and its Health and Human Services Committee met jointly to receive a presentation on national trends in state health insurance exchanges from Millbank Memorial Fund President and former Rhode Island health insurance commissioner Christopher F. Koller. Rhode Island is one of 16 states that opted to administer its own exchange instead of using the federal system, and must decide

whether to continue in the face of an upcoming cut in federal aid to state exchanges.

- **Legislators, leaders join businesses at Small Business Economic Summit**
House Speaker Nicholas A. Mattiello and President of the Senate M. Teresa Paiva Weed and more than two dozen other legislators participated in the annual Rhode Island Small Business Economic Summit at Bryant University, where they discussed the issues and challenges faced by small business. Gov. Gina Raimondo, Lt. Gov. Daniel McKee and Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea also took part.