

June 16, 2017

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.rilegislature.gov/pressrelease>



- **House Finance Committee approves 2018 budget bill**

The House Finance Committee approved a \$9.2 billion 2018 state budget that eliminates the \$134 million shortfall that opened up in May and funds the first year of a six-year phase-out of the car tax, raises the minimum wage, restores free bus fares for the elderly and disabled, includes a pilot program to provide two years of free tuition at CCRI and once again does not include any broad-based tax increases. The bill ([2017-H 5175A](#)), sponsored by Finance Committee Chairman Marvin L. Abney (D-Dist. 73, Newport, Middletown), will go to the full House Thursday. [Click here to see news release.](#)

- **General Assembly OKs bill making deadlines for school safety assessments**

The General Assembly has passed legislation ([2017-H 5016](#), [2017-S 0022](#)) introduced by Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) and Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick) that would establish time guidelines for the assessment of school building safety, along with reports to the governor, speaker of the House and president of the Senate. [Click here to see news release.](#)

- **General Assembly passes renewable energy legislation**

The General Assembly has passed legislation promoting renewable energy efforts. The first bill ([2017-S 0112A](#), [2017-H 5274A](#)), introduced by Sen. William J. Conley Jr. (D-Dist. 18, East Providence, Pawtucket) and Rep. Deborah Ruggiero (D-Dist. 74, Jamestown, Middletown), would expand the successful Renewable Energy Growth Program with an additional 400 MW of renewable energy over 10 years. The second bill ([2017-S 0562](#), [2017-H 5575](#)), introduced by Sen. Erin Lynch Prata (D-Dist. 31,

More...

Warwick, Cranston) and Rep. Lauren H. Carson (D-Dist. 75, Newport), would require the Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources to create rules and regulations to formulate a statewide solar energy permit application.

[Click here to see renewable energy release.](#)

[Click here to see solar permit release.](#)

▪ **Senate OKs Coyne's comprehensive human trafficking bill**

The Senate passed the Uniform Act on Prevention of and Remedies for Human Trafficking ([2017-S 0073A](#)), sponsored by Sen. Cynthia A. Coyne (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence), to bring Rhode Island's human trafficking laws in line with national standards to prevent perpetrators from falling through the cracks. It enacts a three-prong approach of strong penalties, protecting and assisting victims and improved public awareness and planning. It will now go to the House, where companion legislation ([2017-H 5300](#)) has been introduced by Rep. Shelby Maldonado (D-Dist. 56, Central Falls).

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

▪ **Senate passes Goodwin bill raising penalties for DUI with kids in the vehicle**

Those driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs with a child under 13 in the vehicle would face a felony charge with stiffer penalties under legislation ([2017-S 0539](#)) sponsored by Senate Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence) and passed by the Senate. The bill now heads to the House, where Rep. Gregory J. Costantino (D-Dist. 44, Lincoln, Johnston, Smithfield) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2017-H 6009](#)).

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

▪ **Senate passes bill enacting ACA provisions at state level**

The Senate passed legislation ([2017-S 0831A](#)) sponsored by Sen. Joshua Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence) to enact the provisions of the Affordable Care Act in state law to protect consumers and the Rhode Island health insurance market from changes at the federal level should Congress repeal or weaken the ACA. The bill will now go to the House of Representatives, where Rep. Brian Patrick Kennedy (D-Dist. 38, Hopkinton, Westerly) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2017-H 6156](#)).

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

▪ **House passes Carson bill to notify, assist businesses facing road construction**

The Department of Transportation will need to coordinate with the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation to help small businesses that will be affected by RhodeWorks construction projects under a bill sponsored by Rep. Lauren H. Carson (D-Dist. 75, Newport) and approved by the House. The legislation ([2017-H 5783A](#)) is a response to the Broadway Streetscape Improvement Project in Newport, a \$5.8 million project that has restricted parking, temporarily rendered a section of the busy road one-way and resulted in significantly less traffic to local businesses.

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▪ **Senate OKs Lombardi bill to make 38 Studios records public**

The Senate has passed legislation ([2017-S 0932A](#)) introduced by Sen. Frank S. Lombardi (D-Dist. 26, Cranston) that would provide for the release of certain records pertaining to the investigation of 38 Studios, LLC. The measure now moves to the

House of Representatives, which has passed similar legislation ([2017-H 5347Aaa](#)) sponsored by Rep. Charlene M. Lima (D-Dist. 14, Cranston, Providence).  
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **House passes Casimiro bill to create study commission on high school start times**  
Rep. Julie A. Casimiro's legislation ([2017-H 5888A](#)) creating a 15-member legislative commission to study all aspects involved in changing the start time of Rhode Island's public high schools passed the House of Representatives. The commission will examine the fiscal impact on school districts, relevant health and educational issues, and the coordination of statewide afterschool activities in regards to changing public high school start times.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
  
- **House OKs Canario bill to create a study commission on marijuana legalization**  
The House of Representatives has passed legislation ([2017-H 5551A](#)) introduced by Rep. Dennis M. Canario (D-Dist. 71, Portsmouth, Little Compton, Tiverton) that would create a 19-member special joint legislative commission to study the effects of legalizing recreational marijuana in Rhode Island. Sen. Cynthia A. Coyne (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence) has sponsored companion legislation ([2017-S 0277](#)) in the Senate.  
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