

April 4, 2014

Legislative Press Bureau at 222-2457

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/>



- **Speaker announces new House committee leaders**

House Speaker Nicholas A. Mattiello announced new leadership for several standing House committees. Rep. K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) will lead the Labor Committee. Rep. Karen L. MacBeth (D-Dist. 52, Cumberland) is chairwoman of the Oversight Committee. Rep. Jan P. Malik (D-Dist. 67, Warren, Barrington) is chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. Rep. Samuel A. Azzinaro (D-Dist. 37, Westerly) will lead the Rules Committee.

[Click here to see Chairman Shekarchi's release.](#)

[Click here to see Chairwoman MacBeth's release.](#)

[Click here to see Chairman Malik's release.](#)

[Click here to see Chairman Azzinaro's release.](#)

- **General Assembly allows May 15 extension of toll cap on Sakonnet River Bridge**

The General Assembly passed legislation ([2014-S 2697A](#), [2014-H 7569aa](#)), sponsored by Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Little Compton, Newport, Tiverton) and Rep. John G. Edwards (D-Dist. 70, Portsmouth, Tiverton), extending the 10-cent cap on the Sakonnet River Bridge toll from April 1, 2014 to May 15, 2014. Initially, the 10-cent toll was implemented as a placeholder in order to preserve future tolling options for the bridge.

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

- **House passes social media privacy act**

The House unanimously approved legislation ([2014-H 7124A](#)) to establish social media privacy rights and protections for job applicants and prospective students, outlawing employers and educational institutions from requiring an individual to provide access to social media accounts or to divulge personal social media

More...

information. The House bill was introduced by Rep. Brian Patrick Kennedy (D-Dist. 38, Hopkinton, Westerly). A companion Senate bill ([2014-S 2095](#)) has been introduced by Senate Majority Leader Dominick J. Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence).

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

- **Jacquard introduces bill to spur housing industry**

Rep. Robert B. Jacquard (D-Dist. 17, Cranston) has introduced legislation ([2014-H 7560](#)) designed to encourage more home building in Rhode Island through a temporary reduction in permit fees, a temporary reduction in sales tax on lumber and building materials and a three-year moratorium on the assessment and collection of impact fees.

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

- **Senate passes bill allowing digital insurance cards in place of paper**

The Senate passed legislation ([2014-S 2444](#)) that would give motorists the freedom to travel without a paper insurance card as long as they have digital proof of insurance. The legislation includes a provision that prohibits police officers from viewing any other content on those devices, thus protecting individuals' right to privacy. The House versions of the bill ([2014-H 7098](#), [2014-H 7125A](#)) – sponsored by Representatives Gregg Amore (D-Dist. 65, East Providence) and Brian Patrick Kennedy (D-Dist. 38, Hopkinton, Westerly) respectively – have passed through the House chamber and are awaiting Senate approval.

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

- **House OKs Corvese bill to ban hallucinogenic substances**

The House approved legislation, sponsored by Rep. Arthur J. Corvese (D-Dist. 55, North Providence), to include the hallucinogenic drugs salvia divinorum, gypsum or jimson weed as Schedule 1 controlled substances under state law, outlawing its possession, production and sale. The bill ([2014-H 7191](#)) is meant to target unregulated substances that are being sold in convenience stores and gas stations to give users a high. Sen. Frank S. Lombardi (D-Dist. 26, Cranston) is sponsoring a similar bill ([2014-S 2651](#)) in the Senate.

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

- **Pilot program proposed to help Rhode Islanders complete college degrees**

Legislation ([2014-H 7947](#)) has been introduced to create a three-year pilot program allowing Rhode Islanders with at least nine college-level credit hours to complete their degrees. Sponsored by Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston), the program would be open to 1,000 individuals and operated by College Unbound of Providence in conjunction with the Charter Oak State College, Connecticut's accredited online college.

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

- **House passes bill resolving conflict in law that endangers federal funding**

The House approved legislation ([2014-H 7964](#)) that makes state public works project apprenticeship requirements subject to federal law pertaining to federal aid contracts. The intent, said sponsor Rep. Robert E. Craven (D-Dist. 32, North Kingstown), is to

eliminate a conflict in state law that could jeopardize a \$6 million contract being awarded to the Quonset Development Corporation by the Economic Development Agency - U.S. Department of Commerce, or future federal money.

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

- **Pichardo bill would create more inclusive substitute teacher applicant pool**
Sen. Juan M. Pichardo (D-Dist. 2, Providence) has submitted a bill ([2014-S 2428](#)) that would allow individuals with two or more years of college education to serve as substitute teachers for no more than 40 teaching days in any one assignment during a school year. The cap only applies to the total number of teaching days and does not require them to be consecutive. The language also authorizes the commissioner of elementary and secondary education to extend that 40-day period for the appropriate training of a substitute teacher.

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