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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/>



- **Committee hears arguments on minimum wage increase**
The House Labor Committee heard from advocates and businesspeople about legislation ([2014-H 7194](#)) sponsored by Rep. David A. Bennett (D-Dist. 20, Warwick, Cranston) to raise Rhode Island's minimum wage from \$8 to \$9 in 2015, \$10 in 2016, and link it to the inflation rate in subsequent years. Sen. Erin P. Lynch (D-Dist. 31, Warwick) is sponsoring similar legislation ([2014-S 2249](#)) in the Senate.
- **Goldin, Cimini propose tax on guns, ammo to fund anti-violence organizations**
Sen. Gayle L. Goldin (D-Dist. 3, Providence) and Rep. Maria E. Cimini (D-Dist. 7, Providence) intend to introduce legislation to institute a 10-percent tax on the sale of guns and ammunition, with the proceeds distributed to anti-violence organizations. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Lawmakers pitch vehicle excise tax changes for greater taxpayer relief**
Senators Juan M. Pichardo (D-Dist. 2, Providence) and Edward J. O'Neill (I-Dist. 17, Lincoln, North Providence, North Smithfield) have filed bills ([2014-S 2148](#), [2014-S 2077](#)) that would change the system to assess used motor vehicles when determining state motor vehicle excise taxes to one based on the average trade-in price, rather than the retail price. Representatives K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) and Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) sponsor similar legislation ([2014-H 7066](#), [2014-H 7130](#)) in the House. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Ferri and Pichardo push to eliminate high interest exemption for payday lenders**
Rep. Frank G. Ferri (D-Dist. 22, Warwick) and Sen. Juan M. Pichardo (D-Dist. 2, Providence) are again introducing legislation aimed at freeing Rhode Islanders from a

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cycle of debt caused by ultra-high-interest payday loans. The legislation ([2014-H 7285](#)) eliminates a special exemption from the state's usury law that has allowed payday lenders to charge borrowers interest rates as high as 260 percent.
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Legislation earmarks DMV fees for road, bridge maintenance**
Rep. Anthony Giarrusso (R-Dist. 30, East Greenwich, West Greenwich) has introduced legislation ([2014-H 7325](#)) to earmark the \$61 million in current Division of Motor Vehicles revenues for road and bridge maintenance. State spending on maintenance of highways and bridges has been primarily funded from the gasoline tax.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Bill hikes funding for community senior centers, programs**
Rep. K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) has introduced legislation ([2014-H 7236](#)) to establish a program of basic community senior services grants to equitably fund community senior centers and other local senior programs, based on the municipality's population of non-institutionalized persons 65 and older. The bill would increase the grant funding through the Division of Elderly Affairs by about \$400,000 next year over the \$364,000 included in the current budget.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **O'Neill, Morgan submit Social Security bill to ease burden for seniors**
Sen. Edward J. O'Neill (I-Dist. 17, Lincoln, North Providence, North Smithfield) and Rep. Patricia L. Morgan (R-Dist. 26, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick) filed similar bills ([2014-S 2191](#), [2014-H 7207](#)) that would exempt Social Security benefits from the state income tax.
[Click here to see Senator O'Neill's news release.](#)
[Click here to see Representative Morgan's news release.](#)
- **Hearn pushes bill to axe DLT's recertification provision for biweekly pay**
Rep. Joy Hearn (D-Dist. 66, Barrington, East Providence) introduced legislation ([2014-H 7232](#)) aiming to halt an administrative provision requiring companies issuing biweekly paychecks to recertify with the state every four years. Representative Hearn, who sponsored legislation last year to allow businesses to institute a biweekly pay system, said the state Department of Labor and Training's (DLT) recent decision to require companies to recertify for biweekly pay privileges was not included in the intent of the law. The bill she introduced in the 2014 legislative session states that an employer would not be required to partake in a recertification process as long as all provisions of the statute are met.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Legislation introduced to address DOH certificate of need process**
Following a news conference to explain the merits of the bill, Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) introduced legislation ([2014-H 7368](#)) to address concerns about the Department of Health certificate of need process. The legislation stems from hearings held by the House Committee on Health, Education and Welfare into problems encountered by an out-of-state healthcare provider in its

efforts to meet state regulations.

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

- **Resolution urges Congress to require ‘country of origin’ labeling on medicine**
Senate Majority Leader Dominick J. Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) has introduced a resolution supporting federal legislative and regulatory efforts to increase “country of origin” labeling for pharmaceuticals, recognizing that about 80 percent of active ingredients for drugs sold in the U.S. are made abroad. The resolution ([2014-S 2225](#)) has been referred to the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services.

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