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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/>



- **2015 budget bill introduced**

The General Assembly received Gov. Lincoln D. Chafee's 2015 state budget proposal (2014-H 7133) and his annual State of the State address, both his last as governor. The \$8.5 billion proposal includes no broad-based tax increases, a possible reduction in the corporate tax rate, tuition freezes for higher education, and a commitment of \$80 million over five years for bridge repairs. The budget bill has been sent to the House Finance Committee, which, along with the Senate Finance Committee, will hold hearings on it over the course of several months.

- **East Bay bridge commission issues report, personal statements**

The Special Legislative Commission to Study the Funding for East Bay Bridges met to present personal statements members submitted for inclusion in a [report](#) regarding alternative funding for bridges and infrastructure in Rhode Island. The report contains general findings from the committee. The commission, co-chaired by Rep. Helio Melo (D-Dist. 64, East Providence) and Sen. Daniel Da Ponte (D-Dist. 14, East Providence), was established during the 2013 legislative session to allow lawmakers and state officials an opportunity to investigate all types of equitable and reliable funding mechanisms and strategies to support Rhode Island's bridges.

- **Amore bill would form task force to study Common Core State Standards**

Rep. Gregg Amore (D-Dist. 65, East Providence) submitted a bill ([2014-H 7095](#)) creating a task force to evaluate the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) so students, teachers, parents and administrators can fully understand the implications of the new system. The legislation also requires the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) to hold off on distributing the new Partnership for Assessment of

More...

Readiness for College and Careers exam, which is slated to replace the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP), until the task force has completed a report on CCSS and submitted it to the governor and the General Assembly. The task force has 12 months to submit a report.

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- **Legislation would create convicted murderer registry**

Sen. Leonidas P. Raptakis (D-Dist. 33, Coventry, East Greenwich, West Greenwich) and Rep. Raymond A. Hull (D-Dist. 6, Providence) introduced legislation ([2014-S 2031](#), [2014-H 7103](#)) to add convicted and released murderers to the sexual offender registration and notification law, requiring them, upon release, to register with local police, who then provide notification to the community. The two legislators also introduced legislation ([2014-S 2036](#), [2014-H 7100](#)) to change parole guidelines for persons convicted of first- or second-degree murder.

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- **Walsh proposes statewide food-waste collection**

Rep. Donna M. Walsh (D-Dist. 36, Charlestown, South Kingstown, Westerly, New Shoreham) introduced legislation ([2014-H 7033](#)) to phase-in mandatory recycling of non-residential food scrap waste. The measure is aimed at extending the life of the Central Landfill by reducing the waste dumped there, harnessing its potential for energy and organic fertilizer production and boosting Rhode Island's green economy.

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- **Pearson bill pressures cities, towns to practice better financial responsibility**

Sen. Ryan W. Pearson (D-Dist. 19, Cumberland, Lincoln) submitted legislation ([2014-S 2049](#)) to permit the general treasurer to withhold state aid to municipalities that don't fully fund their annual required contribution to a locally administered pension plan. Rep. K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) introduced the bill ([2014-H 7122](#)) in the House.

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- **Legislators aim to ease estate taxes**

Several legislators have filed bills to reduce the burden of estate taxes by raising the threshold at which estates become subject to the tax, and charging the tax on only the portion above the threshold. Rep. Deborah Ruggiero (D-Dist. 74, Jamestown, Middletown) has filed a bill to set the threshold at \$1.5 million, and Rep. Robert E. Craven (D-Dist. 32, North Kingstown) and Sen. Edward J. O'Neill (I-Dist. 17, Lincoln, North Providence, North Smithfield) have introduced bills ([2014-S 7064](#)) moving it to \$2 million.

[Click here to see Representative Craven release.](#)

[Click here to see Representative Ruggiero release.](#)

- **Bill calls for labeling of genetically modified products**

Rep. Dennis M. Canario (D-Dist. 71, Portsmouth, Little Compton, Tiverton) has introduced legislation ([2014-H 7042](#)) to add a definition to state law relative to genetically engineered products (also known as genetically modified organisms, or GMOs) and to set rules for labeling those products. Similar legislation ([2014-H 7093](#)) has been introduced by Rep. Raymond A. Hull (D-Dist. 6, Providence).

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▪ **Legislation introduced to ease annual teacher evaluation rule**

Legislation has been introduced by Rep. William W. O'Brien (D-Dist. 54, North Providence) to alter the requirement for annual teacher evaluations. Under the bill ([2014-H 7096](#)), teachers receiving a "highly effective" rating on their initial assessment would need to be evaluated only every four years, and those receiving an "effective" rating would be re-evaluated every three years.

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▪ **Bill requested by Attorney General requires reporting of elder abuse**

Rep. Elaine A. Coderre (D-Dist. 60, Pawtucket) and Sen. Catherine Cool Rumsey (D-Dist. 34, Charlestown, Exeter, Hopkinton, Richmond, West Greenwich) will sponsor legislation ([2014-H 7091](#)) requested by Attorney General Peter F. Kilmartin to require health care providers to release health care information to appropriate law enforcement personnel if they believe an elder patient has been physically, psychologically or sexually abused or neglected.

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