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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/>



- **Legislators submit ‘Rhode to Work’ bills to boost job resources, training**
As part of the Rhode Island Senate’s “Rhode to Work” legislative action plan, several senators have filed bills to help accommodate the recovering economy with more job resources and training. Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Michael J. McCaffrey (D-Dist. 29, Warwick) filed legislation that would establish the Governor’s Workforce Board in statute as the State Workforce Investment Board, and charges the entity with coordinating a single, seamless and cohesive workforce training system for Rhode Island. Sen. Walter S. Felag Jr. (D-Dist. 10, Warren, Bristol, Tiverton) submitted legislation ([2014-S 2183](#)) to help align workforce development and education policies with each other and with the needs of the business community by adding a business representative of the Governor’s Workforce Board to the Board of Education. Sen. V. Susan Sosnowski (D-Dist. 37, South Kingstown, New Shoreham) introduced a bill ([2014-S 2216](#)) to exempt the Job Development Fund from indirect cost recovery on restricted receipts accounts. That action would free more than \$1.2 million for use in job training and work experience efforts. Rep. Donna M. Walsh (D-Dist. 36, Charlestown, New Shoreham, South Kingstown, Westerly) is sponsoring mirroring legislation ([2014-H 7244](#)) in the House.
[Click here to see Senator McCaffrey’s news release.](#)
[Click here to see Senator Felag’s news release.](#)
[Click here to see Senator Sosnowski’s news release.](#)
[Click here to see Representative Walsh’s news release.](#)
- **Fox, McNamara introduce ‘Pay It Forward, Pay It Back’**
House Speaker Gordon D. Fox (D-Dist. 4, Providence) and House Health, Education and Welfare Committee Chairman Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick,

More...

Cranston) introduced a bill ([2014-H 7201](#)) creating a pilot program called “Pay It Forward, Pay It Back” that would let participating students replace tuition with a plan that allows them to pay for school as a percentage of their income after they graduate. [Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **Senate call for outreach to students identifies thousands**

As the result of a resolution ([2013-S 0512](#)) sponsored last session by Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick), Rhode Island’s state colleges and the University of Rhode Island have identified nearly 9,000 students who stopped taking classes but are within reach of degrees. The institutions are in the process of contacting those students and helping them finish.

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

▪ **Bill proposes hiking tax rate of higher-income earners to fund Head Start**

Sen. Harold M. Metts (D-Dist. 6, Providence) has introduced legislation to increase by 2 percent (from 5.99 percent to 7.99 percent) the tax rate on personal income over \$250,000, using the added revenue to help fund the Rhode Island Head Start Program, which provides early childhood education, health, nutrition and parent involvement services to low-income children and their families. The increase could generate more than \$50 million in revenue.

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

▪ **General Assembly receives State of Education address**

The General Assembly met in joint session this week to hear a presentation on the state of education in Rhode Island from Education Commissioner Deborah A. Gist. Gist has been the state’s education commissioner since 2009 and annually presents a report to the legislature.

▪ **Tanzi introduces bill establishing guidelines on drone use by law enforcement**

Rep. Teresa Tanzi (D-Dist. 34, South Kingstown, Narragansett) has introduced legislation ([2014-H 7170](#)) to regulate the use of aerial drones by Rhode Island law-enforcement agencies. Agencies would need to hold public hearings before acquiring drones, and each use of one for intelligence-gathering purposes would require court approval.

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

▪ **Legislation calls for creation of registry of felony animal abusers**

Rep. Dennis M. Canario (D-Dist. 71, Portsmouth, Little Compton, Tiverton) has introduced a bill ([2014-H 7019](#)) to require that people who have been convicted of felony animal abuse register yearly with the police department in the community in which they live. Similar to the state’s sex offender registry law, local police would be required to provide community notification about individuals on the registry.

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

▪ **Legislation calls for health, safety standards for all R.I. fire departments**

Rep. Scott J. Guthrie (D-Dist. 28, Coventry) has introduced legislation ([2014-H 7197](#)) to require all fire departments in Rhode Island to comply with minimum occupational safety and health standards developed by the National Fire Protection Association

(NFPA). A second Guthrie bill ([2014-H 7184](#)) would expand the definition of police officers and firefighters to include other classes of law enforcement officials, such as Capitol Police, Department of Environmental Management criminal investigators and airport police and firefighters.

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

▪ **Edwards, Metts introduce foreclosure legislation to protect tenants**

Rep. John G. Edwards (D-Dist. 70, Portsmouth, Tiverton) and Sen. Harold M. Metts (D-Dist. 6, Providence) filed bills that would prevent banks from evicting tenants living in foreclosed homes until they sold the house to a new owner. Currently, tenants living in foreclosed homes have only 90 days before the foreclosing lender can evict them without cause. Under the language of the new bills, that new owner would have to be a non-financial institution in order for an eviction of that nature to take place.

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

▪ **Kazarian continues to look for better solutions in aftermath of Newtown**

Rep. Katherine S. Kazarian (D-Dist. 63, East Providence) introduced two bills that she hopes will begin to address one of the principal areas of concern regarding mental health issues at home and across the nation. The first bill ([2014-H 7218](#)) would require all public schools in grades kindergarten through grade 12 to have at least one full-time certified school social worker for every 400 students, per last year's recommendation from the School Social Work Association of America. The second bill ([2014-H 7206](#)) is a resolution asking for an increase in the state's appropriation totaling \$2 million for community mental health centers across Rhode Island and appropriate outreach programs.

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

▪ **Pearson introduces student tax credit legislation**

Sen. Ryan W. Pearson (D-Dist. 19, Cumberland, Lincoln) has introduced legislation ([2014-S 2079](#)) that would establish a student tax credit in order to help cultivate a healthy local economy and retain more young professionals in Rhode Island.

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