

June 6, 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/>



- **House Finance Committee approves 2015 state budget**

The House Finance Committee approved a revised budget bill that closes an unexpected \$67 million gap and fully funds education aid while averting bridge tolls, tax increases and higher education tuition hikes, establishing a steady source for transportation funding, promoting economic development and reducing the corporate and death taxes. The full House is scheduled to vote on the bill June 12.

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

- **Senate passes ban on cell phone use in motor vehicles**

The Senate approved a bill ([2014-S 2092Aaa](#)) sponsored by Sen. V. Susan Sosnowski (D-Dist. 37, South Kingstown, New Shoreham) to make unlawful the use of any non-hands-free personal wireless communication device while operating a motor vehicle, except for public safety personnel or in emergency situations. Those caught violating this provision would be subject to a fine of no more than \$100. That fine can be suspended for a first-time violator who provides proof of acquisition of a hands-free accessory subsequent to the violation and prior to the imposition of the fine.

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- **DNA collection legislation moves toward final OK**

The House approved legislation ([2014-H 7304Aaa](#)) to require the collection of DNA samples from any person arrested for a crime of violence, with the assurance that the sample will not be tested unless or until there is an arraignment and will be automatically expunged if the person is found or proven innocent. Introduced by Rep. Brian Patrick Kennedy (D-Dist. 38, Hopkinton, Westerly), the so-called “Katie’s Law” has been enacted in more than two dozen states. A similar Senate bill ([2014-S](#)

More...

[2101A](#)) was introduced by Sen. David E. Bates (R-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence) and has passed the Senate.

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- **House passes legislation protecting children from online sexual predators**

The House passed legislation ([2014-H 7766A](#)) making it a felony to electronically disseminate sexually explicit images to minors, including photos and videos, as well as live sex acts transmitted via webcam. The legislation was introduced by Speaker of the House Nicholas A. Mattiello (D-Dist. 14, Cranston) in cooperation with the Office of the Attorney General. A companion Senate bill ([2014-S 2610](#)) was introduced by Sen. Frank S. Lombardi (D-Dist. 26, Cranston).

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- **Senate passes measure to divert organic waste from landfill**

The Senate approved legislation sponsored by Sen. Catherine Cool Rumsey (D-Dist. 34, Exeter, Charlestown, Richmond, Hopkinton, West Greenwich) to require institutions that produce 104 tons of food scraps or more annually to dispose of them in a more environmentally friendly manner than tossing them in the landfill. The legislation ([2014-S 2315Aaa](#)) would require the institutions it affects to separate organic waste from their trash and either compost or process it onsite, arrange to have it used agriculturally, such as for as animal feed, or have it processed by a composting or anaerobic digesting facility. Rep. Donna M. Walsh (D-Dist. 36, Charlestown, Westerly, South Kingstown, New Shoreham) is sponsoring two similar bills ([2014-H 7033](#), [2014-H 7482](#)) in the House.

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- **School counselor training legislation approved by Senate**

The Senate has approved legislation ([2014-S 2947](#)) to encourage school districts to train their school counselors on collaborating with business, industry and other community organizations to help create internships and apprenticeships. Introduced by Sen. Harold M. Metts (D-Dist. 6, Providence), the legislation is a piece of the Senate's "Rhode to Work" action plan to address the state's jobs crisis and skills gap.

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- **House OKs Edwards bill offering tax exemption for residential development**

The House approved legislation ([2014-H 7631A](#)), sponsored by Rep. John G. Edwards (D-Dist. 70, Portsmouth, Tiverton) creating a tax exemption for property developed on speculation and renovation of existing residential housing refurbished on speculation. The exemption would not affect taxes on common areas and facilities for residential condominiums and would sunset on Dec. 31, 2021. The legislation is not retroactive.

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- **'Rhode to Work' bill frees up money for job training**

The Senate passed legislation ([2014-S 2216A](#)) sponsored by Sen. V. Susan Sosnowski (D-Dist. 37, South Kingstown, New Shoreham) to exempt the Job Development Fund from indirect cost recovery on restricted receipts accounts. That action will free more than \$1.2 million for use in job training and work experience

efforts. The legislation is part of the Senate’s comprehensive “Rhode to Work” initiative.

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- **Senate OKs bill to steer contracts to firms with lower CEO-to-worker pay ratios**

The Senate approved legislation sponsored by Sen. Catherine Cool Rumsey (D-Dist. 34, Exeter, Charlestown, Richmond, Hopkinton, West Greenwich) to give a preference in state contracts to companies whose CEOs do not make more than 32 times the salary of their lowest-paid employee. The bill ([2014-S 2796A](#)) is aimed at using the power of the public purse to promote equitable pay practices and at encouraging a reduction on the demands for social services that support poorly paid employees.

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- **Senate OKs bill setting accountability, transparency standards for quasi-publics**

The Senate has approved legislation requiring Rhode Island quasi-public agencies to carry out their government missions effectively and to exemplify a commitment to transparent, accountable and effective government. Introduced by Sen. James C. Sheehan (D-Dist. 36, Narragansett, North Kingstown), the bill ([2014-S 2585Aaa](#)) establishes rules and responsibilities for quasi-public board members, establishes transparency requirements and calls for a performance audit of each agency once every five years, beginning in 2015. A similar House bill ([2014-H 7138](#)) was introduced by Rep. Stephen R. Ucci (D-Dist. 42, Johnston, Cranston).

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