

March 28, 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/>



- **Mattiello elected speaker of the House**

The House elected Rep. Nicholas A. Mattiello (D-Dist. 15, Cranston) its speaker, following the resignation of former speaker Gordon D. Fox. Speaker Mattiello, an attorney, has served as the House majority leader since 2010 and was first elected to the House in 2006.

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

- **House Democrats select new leadership team**

House Democrats elected a new leadership team to serve under Speaker Nicholas A. Mattiello (D-Dist. 15, Cranston). Rep. John J. DeSimone (D-Dist. 5, Providence), a 22-year-veteran of the House, will serve as majority leader. Rep. John G. Edwards (D-Dist. 70, Portsmouth, Tiverton), previously senior deputy majority leader, has become majority whip. Rep. Joseph S. Almeida (D-Dist. 12, Providence), now serving his seventh term in the House, is the new deputy majority whip. Speaker Mattiello also appointed Rep. Lisa P. Tomasso (D-Dist. 29, Coventry, West Greenwich) senior deputy majority leader.

[Click here to see caucus press release.](#)

[Click here to see Rep. Tomasso's press release.](#)

- **Speaker appoints new House committee leaders**

Speaker Nicholas A. Mattiello announced several changes in House committee leadership. Rep. Raymond E. Gallison Jr. (D-Dist. 69, Bristol, Portsmouth), a longtime Finance Committee member and previous chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, will lead the Finance Committee. Rep. Cale P. Keable (D-Dist. 47, Burrillville, Gloucester), a Harvard-educated attorney, will serve as Judiciary

More...

Committee chairman. Rep. Robert E. Craven (D-Dist. 32, North Kingstown) will be the chairman of the Municipal Government Committee.

[Click here to see Rep. Gallison's release.](#)

[Click here to see Rep. Keable's release.](#)

- **Senate OKs bill requiring collection of DNA samples in violent crimes**

The Senate has approved legislation ([2014-S 2101A](#)) to require the collection of DNA samples from any person arrested for a crime of violence. Sponsored by Sen. David E. Bates (R-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence), the bill is modeled after "Katie's Law," already adopted in two dozen states. A companion House bill ([2014-H 7304](#)), sponsored by Rep. Brian Patrick Kennedy (D-Dist. 38, Hopkinton, Westerly), was heard this week by the House Judiciary Committee.

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

- **House passes Giarrusso bill closing loophole in school hiring**

The House passed legislation ([2014-H 7219A](#)), sponsored by Rep. Antonio Giarrusso (R-Dist. 30, East Greenwich, West Greenwich), to require national background checks for all employees of firms contracting with Rhode Island school districts.

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

- **Diaz, Goodwin submit legislation smoothing path for GED seekers**

Rep. Grace Diaz (D-Dist. 11, Providence) submitted legislation ([2014-H 7564](#)) authorizing the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) to waive General Education Development (GED) fees for individuals with limited income who have received a minimum passing score on the high school equivalency practice test. It would also appropriate a sum of \$200,000 each fiscal year to cover associated administrative costs. Senate Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence) introduced her own legislation ([2014-S-2182](#)) requiring RIDE to consider alternative, low-cost tests utilized by other states and to adopt regulations for a waiver of fees associated with the assessment. The Senate proposal was a recommendation of the Senate's "Rhode to Work" legislative action plan.

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

- **Paiva Weed, Ruggiero bills aim to increase safety on Pell Bridge**

In an effort to address the causes of three deaths within 27 months on the Claiborne Pell Bridge, President of the Senate M. Teresa Paiva Weed (D-Dist. 13, Newport Jamestown) and Rep. Deborah Ruggiero (D-Dist. 74, Jamestown, Middletown) have introduced legislation seeking the construction of a median barrier on the span ([2014-S 2764](#), [2014-H 7760](#)) and increasing penalties for cell phone use by minor drivers and texting while driving ([2014-S 2678](#), [2014-H 7761](#)).

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

- **Bill proposes tax incentives for manufacturing facilities rehab**

Rep. Scott J. Guthrie (D-Dist. 28, Coventry) has introduced legislation ([2014-H 7983](#)) to establish new tax credits as incentives for owners to rehabilitate mills and manufacturing facilities and put them into operation, in an effort to attract high-tech, emerging manufacturing jobs to Rhode Island. The incentive proposed in the bill,

which is before the House Finance Committee, would be a 30-percent credit on taxes for qualified rehabilitation expenses.