

May 23, 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 speaker, majority leader back repayment of 38 Studios bond**  
As part of a fact-finding mission regarding the repayment of the 38 Studios moral obligation bond, House Speaker Nicholas A. Mattiello (D-Dist. 15, Cranston) and House Majority Leader John J. DeSimone (D-Dist. 5, Providence) traveled to New York City to sit with representatives from two major bond rating agencies: Moody's and Standard & Poor's. Information they received from those meetings prompted the speaker to hold a Democratic caucus and announce he will support repayment of the bond in order to preserve the state's credit rating.
- **Senate OKs legislation banning, penalizing 'revenge porn'**  
Acknowledging a growing problem of photos and videos being posted on the Internet without the consent of the individual depicted in the images and with the express intent to embarrass or harm that individual, the Senate approved legislation ([2014-S 2644aa](#)) to prohibit the posting of "revenge porn." The bill, sponsored by Sen. Erin P. Lynch (D-Dist. 31, Warwick, Cranston), makes violations a felony, punishable by up to three years in prison and/or a fine up to \$3,000. A companion House bill ([2014-H 7382](#)) has been introduced by Rep. Donald J. Lally Jr. (D-Dist. 33, Narragansett, South Kingstown).  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **House Finance Committee gathers information on budget status**  
As it prepares the 2015 state budget, the House Finance Committee met with state officials to determine how closely the state's current expenses and revenues are aligning with the budget. Lawmakers learned that current projections point to a \$67 million deficit for the state next year, caused in part by higher Medicaid costs and lower revenues from lottery receipts and income tax.

More...

- **Assembly passes legislation expanding use of prescription database**

The General Assembly approved legislation to expand the categories of medical professionals authorized to access and use the Prescription Monitoring Program database operated by the Department of Health, which includes patients' pharmacy histories with controlled substances. The legislation, which now awaits the governor's action, also requires all practitioners authorized to prescribe controlled substances to register with the database. The bills ([2014-H 7574A](#), [2014-S 2523A](#)) were introduced by Rep. William W. O'Brien (D-Dist. 54, North Providence) and Sen. Christopher Scott Ottiano (R-Dist. 11, Portsmouth, Bristol).  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Assembly OKs legislation requiring breast density reporting**

The General Assembly passed and will send to the governor legislation intended to improve women's health and safety by requiring facilities that perform mammograms to provide their patients with information on the subject of breast density and how it may affect the risk of developing breast cancer. The bills ([2014-S 2522Aaa](#), [2014-H 7341](#)) also require that information to be provided to the patient's physician. Sponsors of the legislation are Sen. James E. Doyle (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket) and Rep. Elaine A. Coderre (D-Dist. 60, Pawtucket).  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate approves bills to have governor, lieutenant governor run as a ticket**

The Senate approved legislation ([2014-S 2417](#), [2014-S 2937A](#)) sponsored by Sen. Roger A. Picard (D-Dist. 20, Woonsocket, Cumberland) to ask voters to amend the state constitution to allow the governor and lieutenant governor to be elected as a single ticket, and spell out the way a gubernatorial candidate would designate a running mate. Rep. Cale P. Keable (D-Dist. 47, Burrillville, Gloucester) has introduced companion legislation ([2014-H 8098](#)) in the House for the constitutional amendment ballot question.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate OKs bill adding element of surprise to sexual assault law**

The Senate passed legislation closing a loophole in the sexual assault law that recently resulted in the dismissal of a charge involving a Level II sex offender. Introduced in cooperation with the Attorney General's office, the bill ([2014-S 2817](#)) adds the term "element of surprise" to the criteria listed in existing law – force and coercion – that constitute second-degree sexual assault. Sen. David E. Bates (R-Dist. 31, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence) sponsored the Senate bill. A House companion bill ([2014-H 7378](#)) was introduced by Rep. Jan P. Malik (D-Dist. 67, Barrington, Warren).  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Walsh legislation would divert food waste from landfill**

Rep. Donna M. Walsh (D-Dist. 36, Charlestown, South Kingstown, Westerly, New Shoreham) spoke about her legislation ([2014-H 7033](#), [2014-H 7482](#)) to divert food scraps from the landfill at a State House event during which Burrillville, North Smithfield and Cumberland schoolchildren were honored for their recycling achievements. Twelve piglets from My Blue Heaven farm in Burrillville, which uses food scraps from local school cafeterias for pig feed, attended the event to demonstrate one beneficial reuse of food scraps. Sen. V. Susan Sosnowski (D-Dist.

37, South Kingstown, New Shoreham) is sponsoring similar legislation ([2014-S 2436](#)).

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

▪ **General Assembly-created nonprofit educates lawmakers on urban development**

Lawmakers listened to a presentation from the staff and clients of Urban Ventures, a General Assembly-generated nonprofit with a mission to provide the public and small businesses with development assistance through education, training and consultation. Entitled “Generating Jobs and Helping the Urban Economy,” Urban Ventures Executive Director Jr Neville Songwe gave lawmakers a brief overview of how the organization has worked to provide direct support to small businesses as part of the 1999 Rhode Island Economic Initiative. Since its inception, the nonprofit has serviced more than 600 clients in Rhode Island’s urban communities, providing customized business development support for entrepreneurs and small business owners who need help enduring the trials of running a company or a start-up.

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