

Feb. 6, 2015

Legislative Press Bureau at (401) 528-1743

## **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/>



- **Bill would let terminally ill use experimental drugs**  
While other legislatures around the nation consider “right to die” laws, Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) has introduced the “Terminally Ill Patients Right to Try Act.” The bill ([2015-H 5093](#)) would allow terminally ill individuals who have exhausted their conventional treatment options to request and obtain experimental drugs that have not yet received federal approval. The intent, said the sponsor, is to give some hope to the terminally ill.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Qualified Jobs Incentive Act introduced in Senate**  
Sen. James C. Sheehan (D-Dist. 36, North Kingstown, Narragansett) has introduced legislation to make tax incentives available to companies that hire new “qualified” full-time employees. Qualified employees would be those working a minimum of 30 hours per week with a salary that is at least 250 percent of the state’s hourly minimum wage. Identical House legislation ([2015-H 5116](#)) has been introduced by Rep. K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick).  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **House Labor Committee holds hearing on bill to raise minimum wage**  
The House Labor Committee took testimony on legislation ([2015-H 5074](#)) sponsored by Rep. David A. Bennett (D-Dist. 20, Warwick, Cranston) to increase the Rhode Island minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour. Identical legislation ([2015-S 0194](#)) has been introduced in the Senate by Sen. Erin P. Lynch (D-Dist. 31, Warwick, Cranston).

More...

- **Bill would eliminate extra fee charged for renewal of vanity plates**  
Rhode Island motorists with vanity plates pay twice the license plate fee every time they renew their license – the standard renewal rate (\$60 for cars, \$34 for motorcycles) and an additional, equal amount because of the vanity plate. Sen. Frank S. Lombardi (D-Dist. 26, Cranston) has introduced legislation ([2015-S 0187](#)) to eliminate the extra fee when the license plates are renewed.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Bill calls for two-year phase-out of disposable plastic store bags**  
Legislation ([2015-H 5151](#)) introduced by Rep. Gregg Amore (D-Dist. 65, East Providence) sets a two-year plan to end the use of disposable plastic checkout bags by retail establishments. Heard this week by the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, the bill would require large stores (with annual gross retail sales of \$5 million or more) to stop using the bags by Jan. 1, 2016. All other stores would have until Jan.1, 2017, to end their use of the bags.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Legislation calls for AEDs in middle, high schools**  
Rep. Jan P. Malik (D-Dist. 67, Barrington, Warren) has introduced legislation ([2015-H 5163](#)) to require automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in all middle schools and high schools in the state, public and private. The bill would also require AEDs to be available at all athletic fields or other locations where high schools or middle schools compete in sporting events.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Bill would require DOT to clear snow from sidewalks on overpasses**  
Sen. Maryellen Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence) and Rep. Christopher R. Blazejewski (D-Dist. 2, Providence) introduced legislation ([2015-S 0195](#), [2015-H 5349](#)) requiring the Department of Transportation to clear snow from sidewalks on state highway overpasses and overhead pedestrian walkways under state control within 24 hours of the end of snowfall.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Goldin proposes increase to state earned income tax credit**  
Sen. Gayle Goldin (D-Dist. 3, Providence) introduced legislation ([2015-S 0163](#)) to increase the earned income credit on Rhode Island's state income tax to 20 percent of the federal credit while maintaining its fully refundable status beginning in tax year 2016. The credit provides relief to low-income working families.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Tanzi proposes increasing age for tobacco purchases to 21**  
Rep. Teresa Tanzi (D-Dist. 34, South Kingstown, Narragansett) has introduced legislation aimed at increasing the minimum age for tobacco purchases in Rhode Island from 18 to 21 as a means to curb youth smoking and lifelong addiction. The bill ([2015-H 5225](#)) would apply to all forms of tobacco, and would take effect immediately upon passage.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Picard introduces bill to encourage ‘competency-based learning’ approach**  
Sen. Roger A. Picard (D-Dist. 20, Woonsocket, Cumberland) has introduced legislation to encourage school districts to allow students who demonstrate competency in some required subjects to redirect their classroom time to other classes or educational experiences that would benefit them more. The legislation ([2015-S 0010](#)) would direct the Board of Education to adopt a model district policy on “competency-based learning” to promote its use in Rhode Island schools. [Click here to see news release.](#)