

Feb. 20, 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 requires destruction of police records of wrongful, mistaken arrests**
Rep. Carlos E. Tobon (D-Dist. 58, Pawtucket) has introduced legislation ([2015-H 5450](#)) to require the sealing and destruction of all arrest records and indices of arrest for those individuals who are wrongfully arrested or detained by any law enforcement agency. The bill was introduced at the urging of the “Fitting The Description” national initiative that is attempting to rally state legislatures to enact such laws. A companion Senate bill is expected to be introduced by Sen. Juan M. Pichardo (D-Dist. 2, Providence).
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Amore proposes CCRI scholarships**
Rep. Greg Amore (D-Dist. 65, East Providence) has proposed making grants/scholarships available to students attending the Community College of Rhode Island to help ease their loan debt and encourage them to finish their degrees in two years. The legislation ([2015-H 5438](#)) will require high academic performance and excellent attendance rates for students to be eligible for the grants.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Bills introduced to regulate use of unpiloted aerial craft (drones)**
Attempting to get state law ahead of what is expected to be a proliferation of unpiloted aerial vehicles over the next few years, several bills dealing with these craft, commonly called drones, have been introduced. Rep. Raymond E. Gallison Jr. (D-Dist. 69, Bristol, Portsmouth) has introduced a bill ([2015-H 5453](#)) that establishes registration requirements and operational restrictions for such vehicles and criminalizes invasion of privacy by use of the craft. Rep. Stephen R. Ucci (D-Dist. 42,

More...

Johnston, Cranston) and Rep. Arthur J. Corvese (D-Dist. 55, North Providence) have introduced two pieces of legislation — ([2015-H 5292](#)) to give the state the exclusive legal authority to regulate such aircraft and ([2015-H 5293](#)) to establish a legislative commission to study and make recommendations to regulate drones and other unpiloted craft.

- **Bill calls for constitutional amendment on Ethics Commission powers**
Legislation ([2015-H 5374](#)) introduced by Rep. Michael J. Marcello (D-Dist. 41, Scituate, Cranston) would put a question before voters at the next general election (2016), deciding whether the Ethics Commission should maintain jurisdiction over legislators’ votes and other actions. Approval by voters would give the Ethics Commission an exception in the “speech in debate” clause of the Rhode Island Constitution. A Senate companion bill ([2015-S 0056](#)) has been introduced by Sen. Edward J. O’Neill (I-Dist. 17, Lincoln, North Providence, North Smithfield). [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Filippi bill offers tax relief on electricity rate hikes**
Rep. Blake Filippi (I-Dist. 36, New Shoreham, Charlestown, South Kingstown, Westerly) has introduced a bill ([2015-H 5340](#)) that would relieve electricity ratepayers from state taxes that are imposed on the recently approved rate hike for National Grid as well as any future electricity rate increases approved by the Public Utilities Commission. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Reilly bill creates Office of Inspector General**
Rep. Daniel P. Reilly (R-Dist. 72, Portsmouth, Middletown) has introduced legislation ([2015-H 5326](#)) to establish an Office of Inspector General in Rhode Island whose function would be to save the state money by reducing waste, fraud and abuse within state government. Sen. Leonidas P. Raptakis (D-Dist. 33, Coventry, East Greenwich, West Greenwich) has introduced the legislation in the Senate ([2015-S 0051](#)). [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Nardolillo bill addresses sales tax on discounted cell phones**
Signing a cell phone contract may get you a free or discounted phone, but how you are charged sales tax on the phone is up to the store where it was sold. Legislation ([2015-H 5445](#)) introduced by Rep. Robert A. Nardolillo III (R-Dist. 28, Coventry) would ensure that sales tax is applied consistently on cell phones whether purchased from a carrier or an electronics store. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Morgan seeks to combat welfare fraud and abuse**
Rep. Patricia L. Morgan (R-Dist. 26, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick) has introduced several bills aimed at fighting waste, abuse and fraud in the Rhode Island welfare support system. Two bills ([2015-H 5249](#), [2015-H 5250](#)) deal with the Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards and the others ([2015-H 5310](#), [2015-H 5311](#)) focus on Medicaid.

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

- **Coventry Representatives promote measures to safeguard fire districts**
Rep. Patricia L. Morgan (R-Dist. 26, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick), Rep. Sherry Roberts (R-Dist. 29, Coventry, West Greenwich) and Rep. Robert A. Nardolillo III (R-Dist. 28, Coventry) have introduced legislation ([2015-H 5343](#), [2015-H 5344](#), [2015-H 5345](#)) to protect Rhode Islanders who are taxpayers of fire districts around the state by making changes to the various fire district charters, such as placing a 4 percent cap on tax increases.
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Senate Majority Leader calls for AEDs in middle, high schools**
Senate Majority Leader Dominick J. Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, Providence, North Providence) has introduced legislation requiring Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) in all middle schools and high schools in the state, public or private, and at all athletic fields and other locations where high schools and middle schools compete in sporting events. A companion House bill ([2015-H 5163](#)) has been introduced by Rep. Jan P. Malik (D-Dist. 67, Barrington, Warren).