

May 1, 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/>



- **Committee weighs marijuana legalization**

The House Judiciary Committee heard from advocates for and against legislation ([2015-H 5777](#)) sponsored by Rep. Scott A. Slater (D-Dist. 10, Providence) to make marijuana legal for adults 21 and older and establish a system in which it is regulated and taxed similarly to alcohol. Sen. Joshua Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence) is sponsoring identical legislation ([2015-S 0510](#)) in the Senate.

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

- **Murder/parole eligibility bill passes Senate**

The Senate approved legislation to require individuals convicted of murder to spend more time behind bars before being eligible for parole. The bill ([2015-S 0132A](#)), sponsored by Sen. Leonidas P. Raptakis (D-Dist. 33, Coventry, East Greenwich, West Greenwich), would require individuals convicted of first- or second-degree murder who have not been sentenced to life terms to serve at least 50 percent of a sentence prior to being considered for parole. A companion House bill ([2015-H 5158](#)), introduced by Rep. Patricia A. Serpa (D-Dist. 27, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick), is before the House Committee on Judiciary.

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

- **Senate passes RI Family Home Visiting Act**

The Senate approved legislation ([2015-S 0378](#)) that calls for the Department of Health, the Department of Human Services and the Department of Children, Youth and Families to develop and coordinate standards for a system of early childhood home visiting services to meet the needs of the state's most vulnerable families with

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young children. Under the “Rhode Island Home Visiting Act,” introduced by President of the Senate M. Teresa Paiva Weed (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown), vulnerable families would be referred prenatally or as soon after birth as possible to voluntary home visiting programs. A companion House bill ([2015-H 5642](#)) was introduced by Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston). [Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **General Assembly OKs bill to allow bake sales at polls**

The House gave final passage to a Senate bill ([2015-S 0058](#)) that will allow bake sales to operate near polling places. Introduced by Sen. Frank S. Lombardi (D-Dist. 26, Cranston), the bill responds to a situation that arose in Cranston at last November’s election, when the board of elections barred planned PTO bake sales. The legislation, which specifically allows bake sales as long as they do not interfere with the orderly conduct of the election, now goes to the governor. A companion House bill ([2015-H 5261](#)), introduced by Rep. Stephen R. Ucci (D-Dist. 42, Johnston, Cranston), has been passed by the House and awaits final Senate action. [Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **Senate OKs bill to create ‘economic ambassadors’ for RI**

With a goal of undertaking a more comprehensive and energetic effort to promote the state as a good place to do business, the Senate approved legislation ([2015-S 0040](#)) calling for the appointment of “economic ambassadors” for Rhode Island. Sponsored by Sen. Elizabeth A. Crowley (D-Dist. 16, Central Falls), the bill allows the governor to appoint, with Senate advice and consent, unpaid economic ambassadors — respected and/or well-known Rhode Island business people — who would promote business activities and economic investments during their travels around the nation and throughout the world. A companion House bill ([2015-H 5941](#)) was introduced by Rep. Shelby Maldonado (D-Dist. 56, Central Falls). [Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **House passes Rep. McNamara’s student job site training bill**

The House of Representatives passed House, Education & Welfare Committee Chairman Joseph M. McNamara’s (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) legislation ([2015-H 5895](#)) that permits students under 18 years of age who are attending career and technical education schools to participate in career and technical internships or teacher supervised job site training programs. The bill amends the Career and Technical Education section (Chapter. 16-45.1) of the Rhode Island General Laws [Click here for the release.](#)

▪ **Rep. Edwards calls for state managed IRA program for private workers**

House Majority Whip John G. Edwards (D-Dist. 70, Tiverton, Portsmouth) introduced legislation ([2015-H 6080](#)) that establishes a private employer IRA program that allows private employees to contribute at least 3 percent of their payroll period wages into a program that the Department of Labor and Training and the State Investment Commission would oversee and manage. [Click here for the release.](#)

- **Senate holds informational briefing on pension legislation settlement**
A briefing for all senators on legislation to enable the settlement of litigation related to the Rhode Island Retirement Security Act was held on Thursday, April 30. During the briefing, senators received a presentation from the governor's office and treasurer's office, along with attorneys representing plaintiffs and the state. The briefing was conducted by Lynette Labinger, attorney for the plaintiffs; Mark Dingley, special counsel for Governor Gina Raimondo; Jeff Padwa, deputy treasurer and legal counsel for General Treasurer Seth Magaziner; and John Tarantino, attorney for the state.

- **Regunberg joins students, parents and teachers in calling for school repairs**
Rep. Aaron Regunberg (D-Dist. 4, Providence) joined members of the Providence Student Union along with teachers, parents and community members at a State House news conference to call for increased funding to repair the state's deteriorating school buildings. Representative Regunberg is the sponsor of legislation ([2015-H 5434](#)) to create a \$70 million trust to continually generate funding for school repairs. [Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Rep. Lima wants full financial disclosure before committing to stadium**
Rep. Charlene Lima (D-Dist. 14, Cranston, Providence) has introduced legislation ([2015-H 6142](#)) calling for full disclosure of all aspects of the financial dealings of any private entity asking for taxpayer dollars in partnership with private investors including PBC Associates LLC, the group seeking taxpayer dollars to build a new stadium in Providence, before any taxpayer dollars are promised. [Click here to see news release.](#)

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