

April 1, 2016

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.rilegislature.gov/pressrelease>



- **General Assembly approves online voter registration**
Both chambers of the General Assembly gave final approval to legislation sponsored by Sen. Gayle L. Goldin (D-Dist. 3, Providence) and Rep. Aaron Regunberg (D-Dist. 4, Providence) to allow Rhode Islanders to register to vote or update their voter information online. The legislation ([2016-H 7024](#), [2016-S 2513aa](#)), introduced in conjunction with Secretary of State Nellie M. Gorbea and now headed to the governor's desk, authorizes the secretary of state to establish a web portal to allow voters to register or update their existing registration information online.
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- **Rep. Malik, Sen. Felag bills rename highway after fallen R.I. military hero**
Rep. Jan P. Malik (D-Dist. 67, Warren, Barrington) and Senator Walter S. Felag Jr.'s (D-Dist. 10, Warren, Bristol, Tiverton) legislation ([2016-H 7086](#), [2016-S 2127](#)) that would rename a portion Route 114 in Bristol to "The 1st Sergeant P. Andrew McKenna Memorial Highway" passed both chambers of the General Assembly. First Sgt. Peter Andrew McKenna Jr. was killed in August 2015 while serving in Afghanistan. Gov. Gina M. Raimondo signed both bills into law.
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- **Senate approves Ruggiero bill to increase penalties for animal abuse**
The Senate unanimously passed legislation filed at the request of Attorney General Peter F. Kilmartin that would increase criminal penalties for malicious injury to or killing of animals. The legislation ([2016-S 2658](#)) is sponsored Senate Majority Leader Dominick J. Ruggiero (D-District 4, North Providence, Providence). Similar legislation ([2016-H 7317](#)) has been introduced in the House by Rep. William W.

More...

O'Brien (D-Dist. 54, North Providence).

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- **Senate passes two bills to curtail theft of wages from employees**

The Senate passed two pieces of legislation designed to curtail the theft of wages from employees by employers. The first bill ([2016-S 2235](#)) was sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Dominick J. Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) and would establish a procedure for employees to secure liens against employers for unpaid wages. The second bill ([2016-S 2475](#)) was sponsored by Sen. Donna M. Nesselbush (D-Dist. 15, Pawtucket, North Providence) and it increases the penalties for nonpayment of wages and improves access to the justice system for aggrieved employees.

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- **Education Commissioner Ken Wagner delivers State of Education address**

State Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education Ken Wagner delivered the first State of Education address before a joint session of the General Assembly. Wagner discussed how to prepare students with the skills that matter through such initiatives as advanced coursework for all students, re-imagining schooling for the 21st century and empowerment of schools and families.
- **Rep. Serpa legislation would rewrite law on stalking**

Rep. Patricia Serpa (D-Dist. 27, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick) has submitted legislation ([2016-H 7797](#)) that would effectively repeal the state's current stalking statute ([§11-59](#)) and replace it with more thorough legislation that not only redefines stalking but explains the legislative intent behind the law. A companion bill ([2016-S 2705](#)) has been introduced in the Senate by Sen. Donna M. Nesselbush (D-Dist. 15, Pawtucket, North Providence).

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- **Sen. Goodwin introduces bill regulating ride-sharing services like Uber, Lyft**

Senate Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence) introduced legislation ([2016-S 2864](#), [2016-S 2865](#)) to establish regulations and safety measures for the ride-sharing industry, as well as clarify that it is subject to the state sales and use tax. She and House Majority Whip John G. Edwards (D-Dist. 70, Portsmouth, Tiverton) co-chaired a legislative commission that studied how to update state transportation industry laws to account for new ride-sharing services.

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- **Legislation would require child-resistant packaging on e-cigarette liquid**

The House Health, Education and Welfare Committee took testimony on legislation ([2016-H 7427](#)) filed by Rep. Helio Melo (D-Dist. 64, East Providence) in conjunction with Attorney General Peter F. Kilmartin to require child-resistant packaging for e-liquid used in electronic nicotine-delivery systems such as e-cigarettes. Identical legislation ([2016-S 2659](#)) has been introduced in the Senate by Majority Leader Dominick Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence).

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- **Colorado officials share info on marijuana regulation with R.I. lawmakers**
Rep. Scott A. Slater (D-Dist. 10, Providence) and Sen. Joshua Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence) hosted Andrew Freedman, director of the Governor's Office of Marijuana Coordination in Colorado, for a presentation and question and answer session on Colorado's implementation and oversight of the state's marijuana laws. Representative Slater and Senator Miller have both introduced legislation ([2016-H 7752](#), [2016-S 2420](#)) that would remove the state's prohibition on adults using, possessing and cultivating marijuana for personal use.
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