

April 15, 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 OKs powdered alcohol ban**

With final approval in both chambers, the General Assembly approved legislation ([2016-S 2059](#), [2016-H 7026A](#)) sponsored by Sen. Frank Lombardo III (D-Dist. 25, Johnston) and Rep. Lauren H. Carson (D-Dist. 75, Newport) to ban the possession, purchase or sale of powdered alcohol in Rhode Island. The legislation is intended to protect Rhode Islanders, particularly youth, from a substance with an unknown potential for danger and abuse, and to avert potential problems with tax laws and regulations that may be written only to reflect liquid measures.

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- **Senate approves Paiva Weed, Gallo bills on criminal injuries compensation**

The Senate passed a bill ([2016-S 2762Aaa](#)) introduced by Senate President Teresa Paiva Weed that would make residents of Rhode Island who are victims of terrorist acts outside the state of Rhode Island but within the United States eligible to receive victim's compensation payments. The House has passed similar legislation ([2016-H 7538A](#)) introduced by Rep. David A. Coughlin Jr. (D-Dist. 60, Pawtucket). The Senate also passed a bill ([2016-S 2750A](#)) introduced by Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick) that would increase the maximum emergency fund amount for burial expenses from \$8,000 to \$10,000. The House has passed similar legislation ([2016-H 7533A](#)) introduced by Rep. Christopher R. Blazewski (D-Dist. 2, Providence).

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- **Senate OKs Sosnowski bill that defines healthy foods that are sold in schools**

The Senate passed legislation ([2016-S 2757](#)) sponsored by Sen. V. Susan Sosnowski

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(D-Dist. 37, South Kingstown, New Shoreham) that would modify the types of healthy foods and beverages that could be sold to students in schools during the school day by referencing the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. Similar legislation ([2016-H 7657](#)) has been introduced in the House by Rep. Thomas A. Palangio (D-Dist. 3, Providence).

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▪ **Senate OKs Conley bill expanding job opportunities to developmentally disabled**

The Senate has passed a bill ([2016-S 2476](#)) introduced by Sen. William J. Conley Jr. (D-Dist. 18, East Providence, Pawtucket) that requires the Governor's Workforce Board to expand job and career opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Similar legislation ([2016-H 8035](#)) has been introduced in the House by Rep. Gregg Amore (D-Dist. 65, East Providence).

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▪ **Senate OKs Sosnowski bill to address high cost of energy in Rhode Island**

The Senate passed legislation ([2016-S 2675](#)) introduced by Sen. V. Susan Sosnowski (D-Dist. 37, South Kingstown, New Shoreham) that provides that the existence of ratemaking mechanisms shall not be relied upon or cited by the Public Utilities Commission for the purpose of making adjustments in determining an electric or gas distribution company's cost of capital.

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• **Rep. O'Brien bill that raises the level of care for animals passes House**

The House of Representatives passed legislation ([2016-H 7831](#)) sponsored by Rep. William W. O'Brien (D-Dist. 54, North Providence) that raises the level of care required for animals being offered for sale in facilities holding stray animals. The legislation also increases the penalties for those who mistreat animals in such facilities. Similar legislation ([2016-S 2801](#)) has been introduced in the Senate by Sen. Stephen R. Archambault (D-Dist. 22, Smithfield, North Providence, Johnston).

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• **Senate passes reforms to Department of Children, Youth and Families**

The Senate passed two bills as part of the Senate's focus on reform of the state's child welfare system and policies of the Department of Children, Youth and Families. One bill ([2016-S-2502A](#)), sponsored by Senate Health and Human Services Committee Chairman Joshua Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence), is aimed at transforming the child welfare system and requiring a transition away from out-of-home placements. The second bill ([2016-S-2717A](#)), sponsored by Sen. Cynthia A. Coyne (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, East Providence, Bristol), makes it clear that DCYF must notify the public with general information, and the state's Child Advocate with specific information, when there is a child fatality or near fatality.

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• **Senate approves Gallo bill that allows annual wine sampling events**

The Senate passed legislation ([2016-S 2772](#)) sponsored by Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick) that would permit Class A liquor retail license holders to elect on one occasion annually, during the month of November only, to serve unlimited samples of wine products which are available for purchase from the

licensee's outlet. The House of Representatives passed similar legislation ([2016-H 7499](#)) introduced by Rep. John M. Carnevale (D-Dist. 13, Providence, Johnston). [Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **Senate OKs bill giving veteran-owned companies a leg up for state contracts**

The Senate approved legislation sponsored by Sen. Marc A. Cote (D-Dist. 24, Woonsocket, North Smithfield) to give veteran-owned small businesses a preference in the state purchasing process, akin to the benefit that is awarded women-owned and minority-owned businesses. The legislation ([2016-S 2552aa](#)) would set a goal of at least 3 percent of the total value of all state contracts in each fiscal year being awarded to businesses owned by veterans. Rep. Robert B. Lancia (R-Dist. 16, Cranston) has introduced the bill ([2016-H 7119](#)) in the House. [Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **House passes bill to outlaw use of electronic tracking devices in vehicles**

The House unanimously approved legislation ([2016-H 7002A](#)) sponsored by Speaker of the House Nicholas A. Mattiello (D-Dist. 15, Cranston) to prohibit the installation, concealment or placement of an electronic tracking device in or on a motor vehicle. The bill is aimed primarily at protecting victims of stalkers and domestic violence. Similar legislation ([2016-S 2596](#)) has been introduced in the Senate by Senate Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence). [Click here to see news release.](#)

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