

April 8, 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>



- **Electronic voter registration bill signed into law**

Legislation sponsored by Rep. Aaron Regunberg (D-Dist. 4, Providence) and Sen. Gayle Goldin (D-Dist. 3, Providence) to make voter registration easier for Rhode Islanders was signed into law by Gov. Gina M. Raimondo. The legislation ([2016-H 7024](#), [2016-S 2513aa](#)), which the lawmakers introduced in conjunction with Secretary of State Nellie M. Gorbea, will allow Rhode Islanders to register to vote or update their voter information online in time for the November 2016 elections.

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- **Senate passes bills to promote renewable energy**

The Senate passed a trio of bills aimed at promoting job growth in clean energy industries in the state. The first bill ([2016-S-2185](#)), sponsored by V. Susan Sosnowski (D-Dist. 37, South Kingstown, New Shoreham), extends the Renewable Energy Standard, currently scheduled to end in 2019, to 2035. Another bill ([2016-S-2181](#)), sponsored by Sen. William A. Walaska (D-Dist. 30, Warwick) expands the successful Renewable Energy Growth Program with an additional 400 MW of renewable energy over 10 years. The third bill ([2016-S-2450A](#)), sponsored by Sen. William J. Conley Jr. (D-Dist. 18, East Providence, Pawtucket), extends the successful Renewable Energy Development Fund, which provides financing for renewable energy projects, for 10 additional years, to 2027. Rep. Deborah Ruggiero (D-Dist. 74, Jamestown, Middletown) is sponsoring identical measures ([2016-H 7413](#), [2016-H 7473](#)) to the first two bills in the House.

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More...

- **Sen. Walaska, Rep. Handy bill would track language skills in deaf students**  
Sen. William A. Walaska (D-Dist. 30, Warwick) has introduced legislation ([2016-S 2825](#)) designed to better access the language-skills progress of deaf and hard-of-hearing children by tracking language developmental milestones in developmental stages toward American Sign Language (ASL) and English literacy. Similar legislation ([2016-H 7979](#)) has been introduced in the House by Rep. Arthur Handy (D-Dist. 18, Cranston).  
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- **Rep. Hearn, Sen. Goldin sponsor legislation to strengthen Fair Pay Act**  
Rep. Joy Hearn (D-Dist. 66, Barrington, East Providence) has introduced legislation ([2016-H 7694](#)) that would strengthen Rhode Island's Fair Pay Act by providing protections against wage differentials based upon the sex of the employee. Similar legislation ([2016-S 2635](#)) has been introduced in the Senate by Sen. Gayle L. Goldin (D-Dist. 3, Providence).  
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- **Rep. Ackerman, Sen. Ciccone bill would nix apprenticeship program fees**  
Rep. Mia Ackerman (D-Dist. 45, Cumberland, Lincoln) has introduced legislation ([2016-H 7889](#)) that would repeal the \$120 fee for the state apprenticeship program that is currently paid by each program sponsor and it would also repeal the \$24 apprenticeship registration fee which shall be paid by each indentured apprentice. Similar legislation ([2016-S 2852](#)) has been introduced in the Senate by Sen. Frank A. Ciccone III (D-Dist. 7, Providence, North Providence).  
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- **Rep. Naughton bill would create ombudsman for developmentally disabled**  
Rep. Eileen S. Naughton (D-Dist. 21, Warwick) has introduced legislation ([2016-H 8038](#)) that would create a developmental disabilities ombudsman program to be administratively attached to the Department of Administration. The ombudsman would be selected by a committee, named by the governor, and would advocate on behalf of adults with developmental disabilities.  
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- **Rep. Tobon bill would require the listing of all ingredients on cosmetics**  
Rep. Carlos E. Tobon's (D-Dist. 58, Pawtucket) legislation ([2016-H 7915](#)) that requires manufacturers to disclose all cosmetic ingredients on product labels and company websites was heard before the House Committee on Health, Education and Welfare. The bill would mandate that any cosmetic manufactured, distributed or offered for retail sale in the state will have to disclose on the product label, and on the manufacturer's Internet website, the full list of ingredients in the product, including the component ingredients of fragrances, flavors and color additives.  
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- **Sen. DiPalma, Rep. Ajello bill would nix tax on feminine hygiene products**  
Legislation ([2016-S 2607](#)) sponsored by Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Newport, Little Compton, Tiverton) that eliminates the sales tax on feminine hygiene products and disposable home care medical supplies, such as one-use syringes and blood testing strips for diabetics and inhalers for asthmatics, was

heard before the Senate Committee on Finance. Rep. Edith H. Ajello (D-Dist. 1, Providence) has sponsored identical companion legislation ([2016-H 7714](#)) in the House of Representatives.

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▪ **Rep. O'Brien introduces bill that terminates parental rights of rapists**

Rep. William W. O'Brien (D-Dist. 54, North Providence) has introduced legislation ([2016-H 8045](#)) that would terminate all parental rights of convicted rapists when a child is born from the assault. The legislation would apply when the parent has been convicted of sexual assault upon the birthmother and a child results from the sexual assault. After a fact finding hearing by the family court establishes the paternity of the child through DNA testing, the father's parental rights would be terminated by order of the court.

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▪ **Burrillville legislators oppose power plant**

Sen. Paul W. Fogarty (D-Dist. 23, Glocester, Burrillville, North Smithfield) and Rep. Cale Keable (D-Dist. 47, Burrillville, Glocester) announced their unequivocal opposition to Invenegy's application to construct a 1,000-megawatt, fracked gas power plant in the heart of Burrillville's idyllic village of Pascoag. In a [letter](#) to the state's Energy Facilities Siting Board, the Burrillville legislators stated that their opposition was the result of lengthy discussions with their constituents.

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