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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/>



- **RhodeWorks plan to repair roads and bridges becomes law**

The General Assembly approved and Gov. Gina M. Raimondo signed into law RhodeWorks, a sweeping plan to improve Rhode Island's worst-in-the-nation roads and bridges while putting thousands of Rhode Islanders back to work. The legislation ([2016-H 7409Aaa](#), [2016-S 2246Aaa](#)), sponsored by House Majority Leader John J. DeSimone (D-Dist. 5, Providence) and Senate Majority Leader Dominick J. Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) will repair more than 150 structurally deficient bridges and make repairs to another 500 bridges to prevent them from becoming deficient, bringing 90 percent of the state's bridges into structural sufficiency by 2024. It will capture revenue from the large tractor-trailer trucks that cause the most wear and tear on the roads while banning the expansion of tolls to other vehicles unless voters approve.

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- **Senate passes R.I. Family Home Visiting Act**

The Senate passed the Rhode Island Family Home Visiting Act sponsored by President of the Senate M. Teresa Paiva Weed (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown). The legislation ([2016-S 2096](#)) calls for the Rhode Island Department of Health to work with the Department of Human Services and the Department of Children, Youth and Families to develop and coordinate the standards for a system of early childhood home visiting services that would meet the needs of the state's most vulnerable families with young children.

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- **House approves Rep. Regunberg's online voter registration bill**

The House approved legislation sponsored by Rep. Aaron Regunberg (D-Dist. 4, Providence) in conjunction with Secretary of State Nellie M. Gorbea to allow Rhode

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Islanders to register to vote or update their voter information online. The legislation ([2016-H 7024](#)) would authorize the secretary of state to establish a web portal to allow voters to register or update their existing registration information online and allow the application information to be cross-referenced with information in the databases of other state, municipal or quasi-public agencies for verification.

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▪ **Senate passes Lombardo bill outlawing powdered alcohol**

The Senate passed legislation ([2016-S 2059](#)) to prohibit the use and sale of powdered alcohol in the state. Sponsored by Sen. Frank Lombardo III (D-Dist. 25, Johnston), the legislation will prohibit the use, purchase or sale of the powdered alcohol in the state, excluding bona fide research purposes. Violators would be subject to a fine of up to \$1,000.

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▪ **Rep. McNamara bill would allow terminally ill to use experimental drugs**

Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) has resubmitted a bill that would allow terminally ill patients to obtain experimental drugs that have not yet been federally approved but which may be in the final stages of FDA testing. The legislation ([2016-H 7156](#)) would create the Rhode Island Terminally Ill Patients Right to Try Act of 2016, which would establish the conditions for the use of experimental treatments.

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▪ **Rep. Slater, Sen. Miller to introduce marijuana legalization legislation**

Rep. Scott A. Slater (D-Dist. 10, Providence) and Sen. Joshua Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence) joined Regulate RI at a press conference at the State House to announce legislation that would legalize and tax recreational marijuana use for adults in Rhode Island. Representative Slater and Senator Miller will formally introduce the legislation in the coming weeks.

▪ **Rep. Nardolillo bill provides assistance for deaf customers at drive-throughs**

Rep. Robert A. Nardolillo III (R-Dist. 28, Coventry) has submitted legislation that seeks to offer options to deaf customers at drive-through windows. The bill ([2016-H 7490](#)) would require establishments selling drinks or food by the use of drive-through windows to install at the ordering station serving each such window, equipment to be used to assist the deaf and hard-of-hearing in ordering, and train its personnel in the use of such equipment.

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▪ **Sen. Kettle introduces legislation to combat food stamp fraud**

Sen. Nicholas D. Kettle (R-Dist. 21, Coventry, Foster, Scituate, West Greenwich) has introduced legislation that would require anyone using the food stamp program to show photo identification. The bill ([2016-S 2116](#)) would require retailers to examine a photo ID to verify that a buyer presenting an EBT card is the person entitled to use the card.

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▪ **Sen. Sheehan amendment would restore ethics oversight to legislature**

Sen. James C. Sheehan has introduced a resolution calling for a referendum on a

constitutional amendment that would re-establish the authority of the Ethics Commission over the core legislative acts of the General Assembly while preserving the venerated tradition of “free speech” for each member. If approved by the General Assembly and signed into law this year, the ballot question would go before voters during the 2016 general election.

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▪ **Twin River Tiverton bills heard in House and Senate Committees**

The legislation ([2016-H 7228](#), [2016-S 2081](#)) necessary to allow Twin River to transfer its operations at Newport Grand to a new facility in Tiverton, pending approval from voters statewide and in Tiverton, was heard by both the House Committee on Finance and the Senate Committee on Special Legislation and Veterans Affairs this week. The House version is sponsored by House Majority Leader John J. DeSimone (D-Dist. 5, Providence) and the Senate version is sponsored by Senate Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence).

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