

Jan. 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.rilin.state.ri.us/News/>



- **Secretary of State swears in new senator, John Pagliarini**
Sen. John A. Pagliarini Jr., (R-Dist. 11, Portsmouth, Bristol and Tiverton) was formally sworn into office by Secretary of State Nellie M. Gorbea. Senator Pagliarini was elected during a special election to fill the Senate seat vacated by Republican Christopher S. Ottiano.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Costantino testifies before House Oversight Committee**
Former House Finance Committee chairman Steven Costantino testified before the House Oversight Committee about the passage of the Job Creation Guaranty Program and the approval of a loan guaranty to 38 Studios, Curt Schilling's video game development company, which later failed. The meeting was part of the committee's hearings into the matters leading up to the state's investment in 38 Studios.
- **Rep. McNamara introduces bill making Student Loan Bill of Rights**
Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) has introduced legislation that would establish a Student Loan Bill of Rights in Rhode Island. The proposed legislation ([2016-H 7081](#)) would authorize the creation of the position of student loan ombudsman within the Division of Higher Education Assistance of the office of the commissioner of postsecondary education.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Republicans introduce No Toll Bridgeworks plan**
Republican representatives, led by Rep. Patricia Morgan (R-Dist. 26, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick), introduced legislation ([2016-H 7192](#)) that would fund the maintenance and repair of bridges by the motor fuel tax, motor vehicle operation violation fees, motor vehicle inspection fees, renewable energy fees, video lottery

More...

terminal sales, motion picture production and the capital plan fund account.

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- **Sen. Da Ponte calls for analysis and consideration of all government debt**
Senate Finance Committee Chairman Daniel Da Ponte (D-Dist. 14, East Providence) introduced legislation ([2016-S 2007](#)) that requires a limit for total bonded indebtedness, authorized and/or issued, be established and voted upon for state government debt, and that of all the quasi-public entities and the municipalities. Under the legislation, the Public Finance Management Board would review the aggregate debt totals and recommend a debt limit to the governor and General Assembly on a regular basis.
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Naval War College officers meet with legislative panel**
Forty-nine domestic and foreign Naval Officers from the Naval War College in Newport met with a legislative panel in the House Chamber to learn about the legislative process in their host state of Rhode Island. The panel was co-chaired by Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Little Compton, Newport, Tiverton) and House Finance Chairman Raymond E. Gallison Jr. (D-Dist. 69, Bristol, Portsmouth).
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Rep. Canario moves to ban prone restraints in state licensed facilities**
Rep. Dennis M. Canario (D-Dist. 71, Portsmouth, Tiverton, Little Compton) introduced legislation that prohibits using prone restraints at certain state licensed facilities and creates a study commission to study the restraint reporting requirements of those same facilities. The legislation ([2016-H 7154](#)) is in response to the controversial technique of prone restraining that has led to cases of asphyxia and death when utilized.
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- **Representatives want education aid formula linked to affordable housing**
Representatives from four of the only five Rhode Island communities that have met the state's affordable housing mandate are urging the working group studying the education aid formula to consider making communities' affordable housing level a factor in the distribution of education aid. The letter was signed by Lauren H. Carson (D-Dist. 75, Newport), Rep. Michael A. Morin (D-Dist. 49, Woonsocket), Rep. Shelby Maldonado (D-Dist. 56, Central Falls) and Rep. John M. Carnevale (D-Dist. 13, Providence, Johnston).
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **House committees review charter school bills**
House committees held hearings on two bills concerning approval of new charter schools or expansions of existing ones. The Health, Education and Welfare Committee heard legislation ([2016-H 7051](#)) sponsored by Rep. Patricia Serpa (D-Dist. 27, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick) to require approval from the city or town council of each sending school district for each new charter public school or the expansion of an existing one. The Finance Committee held a hearing on legislation ([2016-H 7066](#)) sponsored by Rep. Jeremiah O'Grady (D-Dist. 46, Lincoln,

Pawtucket) requiring the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education to consider the financial impact on the school districts from which students would be drawn before any new charter school, mayoral academy or an expansion of one can be approved.

▪ **Pearson plans to introduce education funding formula reform**

Sen. Ryan Pearson (D-Dist. 19, Cumberland, Lincoln) released an overview on how the state's education funding formula has performed against its original goals and recommendations on reform areas. As a result of the review, Senator Pearson is making recommendations regarding mayoral academies, charters, the application process, a Municipal Incentive Fund, and annual audits. He plans to introduce formal legislation by the end of this month.

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