

June 17, 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>



- **House, Senate Finance Committee approve 2017 budget bill**
The House approved an \$8.96 billion 2017 state budget bill ([2016-H 7454Aaa](#)), sponsored by House Finance Committee Chairman Marvin L. Abney (D-Dist. 73, Newport) that includes no broad-based tax increases, provides tax relief to retirees, enhances the state’s economic development tools, fully funds education, significantly scales back a proposal to tax medical marijuana and rolls back parking fees at state beaches to 2011 levels. The Senate Finance Committee then gave the bill its recommendation, and it was scheduled for a vote before the full Senate Friday afternoon.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **General Assembly passes ethics reform sponsored by Speaker, Senate President**
The General Assembly unanimously approved legislation to restore the Ethics Commission’s jurisdiction over lawmakers. The joint resolution ([2016-H 8189A](#), [2016-S 2953A](#)) sponsored by Speaker of the House Nicholas A. Mattiello (D-Dist. 15, Cranston) and President of the Senate M. Teresa Paiva Weed (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown) puts a constitutional amendment before voters at the November general election that would close the legislative immunity loophole.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Assembly OKs bill providing coverage for off-label uses of prescription drugs**
The General Assembly has passed legislation ([2016-S 2499A](#), [2016-H 7512](#)) introduced by Sen. William A. Walaska (D- Dist. 30, Warwick) and Rep. K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) that would provide Rhode Islanders expanded coverage for experimental uses of prescription drugs. Rhode Island law requires

More...

insurers to cover “off-label” use for drugs to treat cancer. The legislation would extend that law so that it applies not only to cancer patients, but to those with other disabling or life-threatening chronic diseases.

[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **General Assembly adds PTSD to conditions treatable with medical marijuana**
The General Assembly voted to approve legislation ([2016-S 2115](#), [2016-H 7142](#)) introduced by Sen. Stephen R. Archambault (D-Dist. 22, Smithfield, North Providence, Johnston) and Rep. Scott A. Slater (D-Dist. 10, Providence) that would add post-traumatic stress disorder to the list of conditions that may be treated with medical marijuana. The measure now heads to the governor’s office.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **General Assembly OKs Rocky Point specialty license plates**
The General Assembly has passed legislation ([2015-H 7011](#), [2015-S 2076aa](#)) introduced by Rep. Joseph J. Solomon Jr. (D-Dist. 22, Warwick) and Sen. William A. Walaska (D-Dist. 30, Warwick), that will create a specialty registration plate honoring the Rocky Point Foundation, which advocates and supports the public access and enjoyment of the former amusement park.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Assembly approves Holocaust and genocide education legislation**
The General Assembly approved legislation sponsored by Rep. Katherine Kazarian (D-Dist. 63, East Providence) and Sen. Gayle L. Goldin (D-Dist. 3, Providence) to require school districts to teach students about genocide and the Holocaust. The legislation ([2016-H 7488A](#), [2016-S 2396A](#)), which will now be forwarded to the governor, would require each district to include in its curriculum a unit on the Holocaust and genocide for every student by the time he or she graduates.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Legislators OK limited retail sales at breweries, distilleries**
The General Assembly passed legislation ([2016-H 8100B](#), [2016-S 3053A](#)) sponsored by Rep. Michael A. Morin (D-Dist. 49, Woonsocket) and Sen. V. Susan Sosnowski (D-Dist. 37, South Kingstown, New Shoreham) to allow breweries and distilleries to sell limited amounts of their products to visitors for sampling and off-site consumption. The bill is meant to help these small manufacturers and to encourage tourists as well as locals to visit them.
- **General Assembly passes legislation prohibiting revenge porn and sextortion**
The General Assembly approved bills ([2016-H 7537](#), [2016-S 2540](#)) that would prohibit the posting of “revenge porn” without the consent of the individual in the images and create criminal penalties for those who engage in “sextortion.” The measure now moves to the governor’s desk for consideration.
Filed at the request of Attorney General Peter F. Kilmartin, the legislation is sponsored by Rep. Robert E. Craven Sr. (D-Dist. 32, North Kingstown) and Sen. Erin Lynch Prata (D-Dist. 31, Warwick, Cranston).
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Legislators OK bill mandating mental health, substance abuse training for police**

The General Assembly has passed legislation ([2016-H 7259](#), [2016-S 2401](#)) sponsored by Rep. K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) and Sen. Stephen R. Archambault (D-Dist. 22, Smithfield, North Providence, Johnston) that requires training for law enforcement officers on mental health and substance abuse emergencies. The bill now heads to Governor Raimondo's desk for action. The legislation requires the Commission on Standards and Training to provide training and instructions for police officers and trainees in order to more accurately identify complaints involving mental health or substance abuse emergencies and to develop law enforcement responses to such emergencies.

[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **House of Representatives to study solitary confinement**

A new House commission will study the use of solitary confinement in the Rhode Island Adult Correctional Institute (ACI) under legislation ([2016-H 8206A](#)) sponsored by Rep. Aaron Regunberg (D-Dist. 4, Providence) and approved by the House. The 19-member special legislative study commission is to perform a comprehensive study of the use of solitary confinement, its effects and alternatives and best practices used by other jurisdictions, and report to the House by Jan. 27, 2017.

[Click here to see news release.](#)

-30-

For an electronic version of this and all press releases published by the Legislative Press and Public Information Bureau, please visit our website at <http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/News>.