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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.rilegislature.gov/pressrelease>



- **House passes Corvese bill targeting SNAP benefits misuse**
The House approved legislation ([2016-H 7203](#)) sponsored by Rep. Arthur J. Corvese (D-Dist. 55, North Providence) to ban the use of electronic benefit transfer cards for the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program at establishments that specialize in products aimed at adults, like liquor stores. Sen. William A. Walaska (D-Dist. 30, Warwick) is sponsoring similar legislation ([2016-S 2040](#)) in the Senate.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate approves online voter registration**
The Senate approved legislation ([2016-S 2513aa](#)) sponsored by Sen. Gayle L. Goldin (D-Dist. 3, Providence) in conjunction with Secretary of State Nellie M. Gorbea to allow Rhode Islanders to register to vote or update their voter information online. The House has approved identical legislation ([2016-H 7024](#)) sponsored by Rep. Aaron Regunberg (D-Dist. 4, Providence).
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Sen. Nesselbush bill would eliminate medical records fees for veterans**
The Senate passed Sen. Donna M. Nesselbush's (D-Dist. 15, Pawtucket, North Providence) legislation ([2016-S 2296](#)) that would require health care providers to give veterans their medical records at no cost if they are used to apply for any kind of benefits. The fee waiver would include any charges from copying, postage, retrieval or processing fees when a veteran requests their medical records in applying for a post-service benefit.
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More...

- **Sen. Crowley, Rep. Serpa bill seeks expanded coverage for substance abuse**
Legislation ([2016-S 2510](#), [2016-H 7625](#)) sponsored by Sen. Elizabeth A. Crowley (D-Dist. 16, Central Falls, Pawtucket) and Rep. Patricia Serpa (D-Dist. 27, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick) would require insurance companies to cover at least 90 days of residential or inpatient services for mental health and/or substance abuse disorders.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Reps. Johnston, Amore bills would strengthen Rhode Island’s DUI law**
Legislation sponsored by Rep. Raymond H. Johnston Jr. (D-Dist.61, Pawtucket) and Rep. Gregg Amore (D-Dist. 65, East Providence) would strengthen the state’s DUI law. The Johnston legislation ([2016-H 7461](#)) would increase penalties for those who are convicted of killing or injuring individuals while driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. The Amore bill ([2016-H 7457](#)) would extend the so-called “look back” period on repeat alcohol-related offenses from five years to 10 years.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Bill would allow restaurants to welcome dogs in outdoor dining areas**
Legislation ([2016-H 7257](#)) sponsored by Rep. Charlene M. Lima (D-Dist. 14, Cranston, Providence) would permit restaurants to allow dogs to accompany diners in outdoor seating areas, subject to some limitations. Although some restaurants already allow the practice, there is currently no law addressing the matter.
- **Sen. Ciccone introduces bill to enact statewide motor vehicle excise tax**
Sen. Frank A. Ciccone III (D-Dist. 7, Providence, North Providence) has introduced legislation ([2016-S 2689](#)) that would create a statewide uniform motor vehicle excise tax rate. The legislation would also create a fund to reimburse municipalities that will lose tax revenue due to the enactment of the statewide rate. The bill would create a uniform tax rate of \$29.10 per \$1,000 of valuation of the motor vehicle, which is the statewide average of all the various car tax rates Rhode Island municipalities currently employ.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Amore calls for lifting of social gaming ban**
Rep. Gregg Amore (D-Dist. 65, East Providence) has introduced legislation ([2016-H 7141](#)) that would allow social gaming in private residences, public taverns, and private clubs as long as there is a social relationship between participants and no person other than the participants receives anything of value. The legislation further establishes that no entry fees or proceeds from the gaming can be paid to the house, host, owner or manager of the establishment or private residence.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Kazarian bill would require athletic trainers at school practices, games**
Rep. Katherine S. Kazarian’s (D-Dist. 63, East Providence) legislation ([2016-H 7639](#)) that aims to protect high school athletes from concussions and other serious injuries by requiring all school districts to have an athletic trainer present for all high school athletic practices and games was heard before the House Committee on Health, Education and Welfare.
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Rep. O'Brien introduces legislation that lowers business corporation tax**
Rep. William W. O'Brien (D-Dist. 54, North Providence) has introduced legislation ([2016-H 7884](#)) that would lower the state's business corporation tax from 7 percent to 6 percent. The rate change would take effect upon passage of the legislation.
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