

May 13, 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 speaker, Senate president introduce ethics reform legislation**
Speaker of the House Nicholas Mattiello (D-Dist. 15, Cranston) and President of the Senate M. Teresa Paiva Weed (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown) introduced legislation ([2016-H 8189](#), [2016-S 2953](#)) to broaden the powers of the state's Ethics Commission over the legislature. The legislation seeks elimination of legislative immunity from Ethics Commission oversight through a constitutional amendment, and makes additional changes to the Ethics Commission and Ethics Code.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **General Assembly approves bills enhancing victims' compensation**
The General Assembly passed legislation to change the Crime Victim Compensation Fund to provide for victims of terrorism outside Rhode Island but within the U.S., and to increase its limit for funeral compensation and relocation reimbursements. The bills are now headed to the governor's desk. The first measure ([2016-S 2762Aaa](#), [2016-H 7538Aaa](#)), sponsored by President of the Senate M. Teresa Paiva Weed (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown) and Rep. David A. Coughlin Jr (D-Dist. 60, Pawtucket), allows residents of Rhode Island who are victims of terrorist acts outside Rhode Island but within the United States eligible to receive victim compensation payments. The second measure ([2016-H 7533A](#), [2016-S 2750A](#)), sponsored by Rep. Christopher R. Blazejewski (D-Dist. 2, Providence) and Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick), would increase the maximum payment from the fund for burial expenses from \$8,000 to \$10,000, and would increase the maximum emergency relocation cost award from \$2,500 to \$5,000.
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More...

- **General Assembly approves Family Home Visiting Act**

The General Assembly has passed and will send to the governor legislation sponsored by President of the Senate M. Teresa Paiva Weed (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown) and Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) to establish the Rhode Island Family Home Visiting Act. The legislation ([2016-S 2096](#), [2016-H 7220](#)) 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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- **Senate OKs Walaska bill providing coverage for off-label prescriptions**

The Senate has passed legislation ([2016-S 2499A](#)) introduced by Sen. William A. Walaska (D- Dist. 30, Warwick) that would provide Rhode Islanders expanded coverage for experimental uses of prescription drugs provided the drug is approved for another use by the FDA and there is peer-reviewed medical literature to back its use for the patient's condition. Similar legislation ([2016-H 7512](#)) has been introduced in the House by Rep. K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick).

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- **House passes Rhode Island Terminally Ill Patients Right to Try Act**

The House unanimously passed legislation introduced by Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) 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 bill ([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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- **Senate passes bill to outlaw use of electronic tracking devices in vehicles**

The Senate unanimously approved legislation ([2016-S 2596A](#)) sponsored by Senate Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence) to prohibit the installation, concealment or placement of an electronic tracking device in or on a motor vehicle. The bill is aimed primarily at protecting victims of stalkers and domestic violence. The House approved an identical bill ([2016-H 7002A](#)) sponsored by Speaker of the House Nicholas A. Mattiello (D-Dist. 15, Cranston) last month.

[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate OKs Lombardi bill requiring online providers to provide info to AG**

The Senate has passed legislation ([2016-S 2631](#)) introduced by Sen. Frank S. Lombardi (D-Dist. 26, Cranston) that would add online impersonation and electronic dissemination of indecent materials to minors to the group of offenses for which an internet service provider must provide subscriber account information to the attorney general or to the state police upon proper service and with certification that the information is necessary for an official criminal investigation or prosecution. Similar legislation ([2016-S 7542](#)) has been introduced in the House by Rep. Mia Ackerman (D-Dist. 45, Cumberland, Lincoln).

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- **House passes Kennedy’s Telemedicine Coverage Act**
The House has passed legislation introduced by Rep. Brian Patrick Kennedy (D-Dist. 38, Hopkinton, Westerly) that would create the Telemedicine Coverage Act. The bill ([2016-H 7160A](#)) would require health insurance policies to include provisions for the reimbursement of telemedicine services in the same manner as services provided through in-person consultation or contact. Similar legislation ([2016-S 2577](#)) has been introduced in the Senate by Sen. Gayle L. Goldin (D-Dist. 3, Providence).
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Senate passes Minority Leader Algieri’s patent troll legislation**
The Senate has approved legislation ([2016-S 2542](#)) introduced by Senate Minority Leader Dennis L. Algieri (R-Dist. 38, Westerly, Charlestown, South Kingstown) that would prohibit a person from making bad faith assertions of patent infringement against a Rhode Island target. The law would also allow a target to bring action in Rhode Island Superior Court against the patent troll, where they may be awarded equitable relief, actual damages, costs, attorney’s fees and exemplary damages. Similar legislation ([2016-H 7197](#)) introduced by Rep. Brian Patrick Kennedy (D-Dist. 38, Hopkinton, Westerly) has been approved by the House Judiciary Committee.
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **House approves Fogarty bill requiring 20 minutes of free play recess in schools**
The House has passed legislation ([2016-H 7644](#)) introduced by Rep. Kathleen A. Fogarty (D-Dist. 35, South Kingstown) that would require elementary schools to have at least 20 minutes of free play recess during the school day and forbids schools from taking away recess for academic or punitive reasons. The law would apply to pupils in kindergarten through fifth grade. Similar legislation ([2016-S 2669](#)) has been introduced in the Senate by Sen. Cynthia A. Coyne (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence).
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