

April 28, 2017

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>



- **Senate approves mental health measures as Mental Health Month kicks off**
As advocates gathered at the State House to kick off a month of activities promoting mental health, the Senate approved several measures aimed at improving access to effective mental health care in Rhode Island. The bills are part of a package of legislation aimed at improving mental illness prevention and early intervention, access to treatment, and the overall mental health care system, developed after months of hearings by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee, led by Chairman Joshua Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence).
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- **Senate OKs bill giving veteran-owned companies a leg up for state contracts**
The Senate approved legislation ([2017-S 0085A](#)) sponsored by Sen. Marc A. Cote (D-Dist. 24, Woonsocket, North Smithfield) to give veteran-owned small businesses a preference in the state purchasing process, akin to the benefit that is awarded women-owned and minority-owned businesses. The bill is meant to strengthen opportunities for veterans, many of whom have been discharged from active duty to a job market in which landing full-time employment is a serious challenge. Rep. Michael A. Morin (D-Dist. 49, Woonsocket) and Rep. Robert B. Lancia (R-Dist. 16, Cranston) have both introduced companion legislation ([2017-H 5280](#), [2017-H 5090](#)) in the House.
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- **House approves Rep. Corvese bill aiding resolution of condo disputes**
The House approved legislation ([2017-H 5097aa](#)) sponsored by Rep. Arthur J. Corvese (D-Dist. 55, North Providence) to create a less-costly process for resolving minor disputes involving condominium associations and owners. The legislation

More...

would allow the parties in such disputes to use the existing court annexed arbitration program in Superior Court to come to a legally binding resolution.

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▪ **Senate passes Conley bill ratifying charter change for mayor in East Providence**

The Senate has approved legislation ([2017-S 0655](#)) introduced by Sen. William J. Conley Jr. (D-Dist. 18, East Providence, Pawtucket) that would validate and ratify amendments to the Home Rule Charter of the city of East Providence to change the administrative framework of its local government from a city council-appointed city manager to a full-time mayor elected by the voters of the city. The House of Representatives has passed companion legislation ([2017-H 5147](#)) introduced by Rep. Gregg Amore (D-Dist. 65, East Providence).

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▪ **Rep. Fellela bill would permit naming rights for convention center**

Rep. Deborah A. Fellela (D-Dist. 43, Johnston) has introduced legislation ([2017-H 5379](#)) that would authorize the Rhode Island Convention Center Authority to solicit bids and enter into contracts for naming agreements for the convention center.

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▪ **Sen. DiPalma, Rep. Tanzi bill would raise wages for direct care workers**

Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Little Compton, Newport, Tiverton) and Rep. Teresa A. Tanzi (D-Dist. 34, Narragansett, South Kingstown) have introduced legislation ([2017-S 0471](#), [2017-H 5839](#)) that would urge the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to increase the base wages for direct and home care workers who service the developmentally disabled community.

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▪ **Rep. Canario introduces bill to exempt fees for elderly, disabled state ID cards**

Rep. Dennis M. Canario (D-Dist. 71, Portsmouth, Little Compton, Tiverton) has introduced legislation ([2017-H 6050](#)) that would exempt elderly and disabled Rhode Islanders who cannot operate a vehicle from paying for state-issued identification cards.

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▪ **Rep. O'Brien's Healthy Workplace Act would combat workplace bullying**

Rep. William W. O'Brien (D-Dist. 54, North Providence) has introduced legislation ([2017-H 5862](#)) that would establish a cause of action against employers and employees for workplace bullying, harassment and other abusive behavior that may not fall into other categories that are already protected, such as race, color, sex or sexual orientation. Similar legislation ([2017-S 0189](#)) has been introduced in the Senate by Sen. Frank A. Ciccone III (D-Dist. 7, Providence, North Providence).

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▪ **Senate panel hears results of tests for lead in school drinking water**

The Senate Committee on Environment and Agriculture heard an overview of the results of baseline testing for lead in school water supplies from Dr. Nicole

Alexander-Scott, director of the Department of Health. The committee is chaired by Sen. V. Susan Sosnowski (D-Dist. 37, South Kingstown, New Shoreham).

▪ **House Judiciary Committee holds hearing on gun bills**

Advocates for greater gun control as well as those who defend gun rights testified on 15 bills concerning gun possession in a House Judiciary Committee hearing that stretched into the night. Among the bills heard were one ([2017-H 5345](#)) sponsored by Rep. Katherine S. Kazarian (D-Dist. 63, East Providence) to prohibit anyone other than peace officers and those approved by school authorities from carrying firearms or other weapons on school grounds, and another ([2017-H 6039](#)) sponsored by Rep. John G. Edwards (D-Dist. 70, Tiverton, Portsmouth) to establish application requirements for concealed-carry permits. Companion legislation ([2017-S 0187](#), [2017-S 0664](#)) to those bills have been introduced in the Senate by Sen. Harold M. Metts (D-Dist. 6, Providence) and Sen. Stephen R. Archambault (D-Dist. 22, Smithfield, North Providence, Johnston), respectively.

-30-

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