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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>



- **Senate passes package of prison and probation reform legislation**
As part of its continuing efforts at justice reinvestment, the Rhode Island Senate today passed several bills introduced by Sen. Michael J. McCaffrey (D-Dist. 29, Warwick) that would overhaul Rhode Island’s probation and parole system. An identical package of bills is being considered by the House Judiciary Committee.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **House passes bill shielding researchers from climate change denier attacks**
Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee’s legislation ([2017-H 5098](#)) that would protect scholarly research by faculty members of the state’s higher education institutions from public records requests until the researchers are prepared to publish their work was passed by the House of Representatives. Similar legislation ([2017-S 0177](#)) has been introduced in the Senate by Sen. V. Susan Sosnowski (D-Dist. 37, South Kingstown, New Shoreham).
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Ruggiero bill would address needs of ‘Aging in the Community’**
Rep. Deborah Ruggiero (D-Dist. 74, Jamestown, Middletown) has introduced legislation aimed at addressing “Aging In the Community.” The first bill ([2017-H 5251](#)) would establish a community senior services grant program to provide financial assistance to municipalities and nonprofit organizations that operate senior centers and/or senior programs. A separate resolution ([2017-H 5294](#)) would ask the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority to conduct a comprehensive Elder Mobility Study to examine the mobility needs of the state’s elderly population as part of the authority’s plan for the development of a revised coordinated human services transit

More...

plan.

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- **Rep. Regunberg, Sen. Calkin bills would reduce fossil fuel reliance**
Rep. Aaron Regunberg (D-Dist. 4, Providence) and Sen. Jeanine A. Calkin (D-Dist. 30, Warwick) have introduced legislation ([2017-H 5369](#)) designed to provide incentives for energy users to reduce their reliance on carbon-emitting fuels and encourage the development of cleaner renewable energy projects that keep Rhode Islanders' dollars in the state and create jobs locally.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Phillips looks to make gubernatorial ticket, four-year terms for legislators**
Rep. Robert D. Phillips (D-Dist. 51, Woonsocket, Cumberland) has introduced a resolution ([2017-H 5181](#)) that would ask voters if they want to amend the constitution to have the governor and lieutenant governor run jointly, so voters would cast one vote for both offices. A separate resolution ([2017-H 5267](#)) would create staggered four-year terms for members of the General Assembly.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Cunha bill would increase tax deduction for tuition savings programs**
Rep. Helder J. Cunha (D-Dist. 64, East Providence) introduced legislation ([2017-H 5245](#)) that increases the deduction for the state's income tax for contributions to qualified tuition savings programs from \$500 to \$1,000 for individuals and \$1,000 to \$2,000 for joint filers.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. O'Brien bill would preserve free RIPTA rides for elderly and disabled**
Rep. William W. O'Brien (D-Dist. 54, North Providence) has introduced legislation ([2017-H 5241](#)) to remove the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority's (RIPTA) scheduled bus fare adjustments relating to free bus passes for the elderly and disabled that was enacted in the 2016 state budget.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Sen. Felag introduces bill to raise Rhode Island earned income tax credit**
Sen. Walter S. Felag, Jr. (D-Dist. 10, Warren, Bristol, Tiverton) introduced legislation ([2017-S 0028](#)) that would provide any Rhode Island taxpayers who are entitled to a federal earned-income credit the ability to receive a state earned-income credit equal to 18 percent of the federal credit.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Black and Latino Caucus decries immigration policy trends in administration**
The Rhode Island Legislative Black and Latino Caucus, led by Rep. Shelby Maldonado (D-Dist. 56, Central Falls) and Rep. Carlos E. Tobon (D-Dist. 58, Pawtucket), is disturbed by recent anti-immigration trends in the new presidential administration, and have called for a show of solidarity with those choosing to embrace America by coming here.
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Senate committees hear water quality report**

A joint meeting of the Senate Environment and Agriculture, and Health and Human Services committees was held to hear an overview of the state's annual water quality report from Nicole Alexander-Scott, MD, MPH, director of the Department of Health's Center for Water Quality.

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