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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>



- **General Assembly hears State of the State Address**

A joint session of the General Assembly received Gov. Gina M. Raimondo's State of the State Address on Jan. 17 in the House of Representatives chamber in the State House. In addition to the members of the General Assembly the state's other general officers, members of the judiciary, heads of various state departments and agencies, municipal officials and other guests were in attendance. The governor proposed two years of free tuition at the state's public colleges and university, and a strong focus on manufacturing in the state, among other policy initiatives mentioned.

- **General Assembly receives budget proposal from governor**

The General Assembly on Thursday received Governor Raimondo's budget proposal for fiscal year 2018. The \$9.3 billion proposal includes a 50-cent hike on the cigarette tax, two years of free tuition at state colleges, a 30 percent cut in the state's car tax, and a raise in the minimum wage to \$10.60 per hour. House Finance Committee Chairman Marvin L. Abney (D-Dist. 73 (Newport, Middletown) has introduced the bill ([2017-H 5175](#)) on the governor's behalf, and his committee and the Senate Finance Committee will begin hearings on the plan soon.

- **Sen. Goldin bill would require presidential candidates to disclose tax returns**

Sen. Gayle L. Goldin (D-Dist. 3, Providence) has introduced legislation ([2017-S 0091](#)) that would require all candidates for United States President and Vice President to file copies of their last five years of federal income tax returns with the state Board of Elections no later than 50 days prior to the general election in order to appear on the Rhode Island ballot.

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More...

- **Lima, Kennedy submit legislation that would exempt GPS from texting ban**
Rep. Charlene M. Lima (D-Dist. 14, Cranston, Providence) and Rep. Brian Patrick Kennedy (D-Dist. 38, Hopkinton, Westerly) has submitted legislation ([2017-H 5152/2017-H 5150](#)) to clarify legal uses of cell phones while driving. The bills would provide for exceptions to the prohibition on texting while driving for the use of certain devices including GPS devices and hands-free systems integrated into the motor vehicle.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Regunberg bill seek surtax on companies with high CEO pay ratios**
Rep. Aaron Regunberg (D-Dist. 4, Providence) has introduced legislation ([2017-H 5141](#)) that would establish a surtax on the business corporation tax for publicly traded corporations subject to U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission disclosure and reporting requirements, if a subject corporation reports that the ratio of compensation of its chief executive officer to median worker is equal to or greater than 100 to one.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Nardolillo introduces legislation intended to deport illegal immigrants**
Rep. Robert Nardolillo (R-Dist. 28, Coventry) has introduced legislation that would require the Sheriff's Department to determine the immigration status of all individuals over which they have custody and determine whether or not any prisoner is here legally or illegally. If it is determined a prisoner is here illegally, the Sheriff's Department will be required to inform the Immigration and Naturalization Service.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Sen. Metts to introduce bill to continue free RIPTA passes for elderly, disabled**
Sen. Harold M. Metts (D-Dist. 6, Providence) will be introducing legislation to eliminate the cuts to RIPTA's free bus pass program for low-income elderly and disabled residents. Senator Metts' legislation will restore the program now and into the future, providing a great relief to the elderly and disabled who rely on the program.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. McNamara bill would require traffic stop lesson in driver's ed**
Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) has introduced legislation ([2017-H 5055](#)) that would require driver's education courses to include instruction and information on a driver's responsible conduct if pulled over by a law enforcement officer.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate Majority Leader welcomes Amazon decision to charge sales tax**
Senate Majority Leader Dominick J. Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, Providence, North Providence) said he was gratified by the announcement from online retail behemoth Amazon that it would begin charging sales tax on goods sold in Rhode Island, and looked forward to the day when all online retailers will follow suit. He had authored multiple Senate resolutions calling on Congress to pass a law that would ensure online retailers pay their fair share in taxes to the states. Rep. Brian Patrick Kennedy (D-Dist. 38, Hopkinton, Westerly) had also introduced legislation in the House on the sales tax issue.

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- **Martin Luther King Jr. Commission holds annual celebration**

The Martin Luther King Jr. State Holiday Commission held its annual celebration of the life, and death, of the great civil rights leader on Monday at the Ebenezer Baptist Church. The official holiday commemoration included remarks by commission members, state and religious leaders, several musical presentations, and a number of awards were presented. Rep. Raymond A. Hull (D-Dist. 6, Providence, North Providence), who chairs the MLK State Holiday Commission that annually organizes and hosts the celebration, served as master of ceremonies.

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