

March 31, 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>



- **Chairs named for Senate Finance, Judiciary, Rules/Oversight committees**
Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio (D-Dist.4, North Providence, Providence) has named Sen. Erin Lynch Prata (D-Dist. 31, Warwick, Cranston) to serve as chairwoman of the Committee on Judiciary. He has also named Sen. William J. Conley Jr. (D-Dist. 18, East Providence, Pawtucket) to serve as chairman of the Committee on Finance. He has also appointed Sen. Frank S. Lombardi (D-Dist. 26, Cranston) chairman of the newly created Committee on Rules, Government Ethics and Oversight.
[Click here to see Lynch Prata release.](#)
[Click here to see Conley release.](#)
[Click here to see Lombardi release.](#)
- **Senate OKs Felag bill that adds alcohol to Good Samaritan Act**
Sen. Walter S. Felag Jr.'s (D-Dist. 10, Warren, Bristol, Tiverton) legislation ([2017-S 0170](#)) that amends the Good Samaritan Act of 2016 by adding alcohol and alcohol-related overdoses, possession, or transportation of alcohol by an underage person passed the Rhode Island Senate. Rep. Kenneth A. Marshall (D-Dist. 68, Bristol, Warren) has sponsored companion legislation ([2017-H 5402](#)) in the House. Senator Felag's legislation now heads to the House of Representatives for consideration.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **House approves Rep. Corvese bill to combat fentanyl**
The House unanimously approved legislation ([2017-H 5517A](#)) sponsored by Rep. Arthur J. Corvese (D-Dist. 55, North Providence) on behalf of Attorney General Peter F. Kilmartin to crack down on fentanyl, a powerful synthetic opioid that is now

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involved in most overdose deaths in Rhode Island, through significantly stronger penalties for its possession. The bill will bring the penalties for possession, manufacturing or selling fentanyl in line with those for heroin and cocaine.

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▪ **House OKs support for children who witness violent crime**

The House approved legislation ([2017-H 5452](#)) sponsored by House Majority Leader K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) to expand Rhode Island's Crime Victim Compensation Program to include reimbursement for expenses related to psychiatric care and mental health counseling for underage witnesses of homicides or domestic violence. Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2017-S 0566](#)) in the Senate.

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▪ **Whip Edwards bill would limit highway surveillance to statute, court order**

House Majority Whip John G. Edwards (D-Dist. 70, Portsmouth, Tiverton) has introduced legislation ([2017-H 5989](#)) that would prohibit surveillance on Rhode Island's roadways unless specifically authorized by statute or court order. The bill would not only prohibit unauthorized use of automated license plate readers, but also provide for the confidentiality of information collected or stored.

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▪ **Actor Peter Falk's daughter testifies on Kennedy bill on adult guardianship**

The House Judiciary Committee heard testimony on legislation ([2017-H 5710](#)) introduced by Rep. Brian Patrick Kennedy (D-Dist. 38, Hopkinton, Westerly) that would secure the rights of adults who are under a limited guardianship. Catherine Falk, the daughter of the late Peter Falk, best known for portraying Lieutenant Columbo on television, is a national activist for guardianship reform and elder abuse awareness. She appeared before the committee to testify on behalf of the legislation.

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▪ **House committee hears Rep. McNamara's Right to Try Act**

The House Committee on Health, Education and Welfare heard testimony on legislation submitted 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 that may be in the final stages of FDA testing. The legislation ([2017-H 5676](#)) would create the Rhode Island Terminally Ill Patients Right to Try Act of 2017, which would establish the conditions for the use of experimental treatments.

[Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **Rep. Ruggiero bill would create Coastal Adaptation Fund**

Rep. Deborah Ruggiero (D-Dist. 74, Jamestown, Middletown) has introduced legislation ([2017-H 5808](#)) to establish the Rhode Island Coastal Adaptation Trust Fund through a 5-cent-per-barrel surcharge on petroleum products, and use the money for grants to cities and towns for the design, planning and construction of climate change adaptation projects for public infrastructure, and for coastal and estuarine habitat restoration. Identical legislation ([2017-S 0442](#)) has been introduced in the Senate by Sen. Erin Lynch Prata (D-Dist. 31, Warwick, Cranston).

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- **Senate committees hold joint meeting on fatalities of children in state care**
The Senate Committee on Finance and the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services held a joint meeting to hear a presentation and hold a discussion relating to a March 23 report from the Child Fatality Review Panel about four child fatalities and two near-fatalities of children in state care. Rhode Island Child Advocate Jennifer Griffith made the presentation to the committees.

- **Senate Finance hears testimony on governor's free college tuition budget article**
The Senate Committee on Finance heard testimony on [Article 3](#) of the FY 2018 state budget, which relates to Governor Raimondo's proposed Rhode Island Promise Scholarship. The proposal would provide two years of free tuition to Rhode Island residents to the state's public colleges and university.

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