

April 20, 2018

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. For more information on any of these items visit <http://www.rilegislature.gov/pressrelease>



- **Magistrates would be selected under merit process under Sen. Sheehan bill**
The Senate Judiciary Committee heard testimony on legislation ([2018-S 2611](#)) introduced by Sen. James C. Sheehan (D-Dist. 36, Narragansett, North Kingstown) that would extend the merit selection process used for judges to the state's magistrates. Similar legislation ([2018-H 7720](#)) has been introduced in the House of Representatives by Rep. Jeremiah T. O'Grady (D-Dist. 46, Lincoln, Pawtucket). [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Marshall bill would scrutinize hospital acquisitions from neighboring states**
Rep. Kenneth A. Marshall (D-Dist. 68, Bristol, Warren) is sponsoring legislation to make the state review process more thorough for hospital acquisitions and mergers involving hospital systems from states adjacent to Rhode Island. The bill ([2018-H 7963](#)), introduced as a result of the proposed acquisition of the Care New England network by Massachusetts-based Partners HealthCare, is meant to ensure the process considers the potential effects such acquisitions could have on health insurance premiums and other aspects of health care for Rhode Islanders. Identical legislation ([2018-S 2794](#)) has been submitted in the Senate by Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Newport, Tiverton, Little Compton). [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Lancia bill would exempt military pensions from state income tax**
A press conference was held to launch proposed legislation ([2018-H 7141](#)) introduced by Rep. Robert B. Lancia (R-Dist. 16, Cranston) that would exempt the amount of military pension which is included in federal adjusted gross income from the state

More...

income tax. The exemption would be phased in over a five-year period.

- **Sen. Metts bill would eliminate exemptions for predatory payday lenders**
Legislation ([2018-S 2173](#)) sponsored by Sen. Harold M. Metts (D-Dist. 6, Providence) would abolish ultra-high-interest payday loans by eliminating a special exemption from usury laws that has allowed payday lenders to charge interest rates as extreme as 260 percent, subverting the 36-percent constraint imposed upon conventional loans. Rep. Jean Phillippe Barros (D-Dist. 59, Pawtucket) has introduced the bill ([2018-H 7557](#)) in the House.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Nardolillo legislation would require seat belts on school buses**
Rep. Robert A. Nardolillo III (R-Dist. 28, Coventry) has introduced legislation ([2018-H 8067](#)) requiring all school buses in Rhode Island be equipped with seat belts to protect students. The bill would require that every new school bus purchased or leased for use in Rhode Island be equipped with a three-point seat belt for every passenger after 2020. The legislation would also require every school district to train staff on the proper usage of the new seat belts including how to evacuate a bus equipped with them.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Sen. Calkin bill would defend against wage theft**
Sen. Jeanine Calkin is sponsoring legislation ([2018-S 2286](#)) that would protect workers from a common form of wage theft by making those who hire contractors share in accountability if their contractors fail to pay their workers' wages. Rep. Marcia Ranglin-Vassell (D-Dist. 5, Providence) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2018-H 7117](#)) in the House.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Sen. Picard bill expands pain therapies covered by insurance**
Sen. Roger A. Picard (D-Dist. 20, Woonsocket, Cumberland) is sponsoring legislation ([2018-S 2537](#)) aimed at helping to reduce opioid dependence by requiring insurers to cover alternative, non-opioid treatments for pain, including physical therapy, occupational therapy, massage therapy, acupuncture and oriental medicine. Rep. Michael A. Morin (D-Dist. 49, Woonsocket) is sponsoring identical legislation ([2018-H 7499](#)) in the House.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. O'Brien calls for arming RIC and CCRI police officers**
Rep. William W. O'Brien (D-Dist. 54, North Providence) is calling for the arming of police officers on the campuses of Rhode Island College and the Community College of Rhode Island. Currently, neither campus police force carries firearms. The University of Rhode Island is the only public institute of higher education that has armed its campus police officers. URI instituted this policy in 2015.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Sen. Morgan opposes DEM plan to acquire farmland**

Sen. Elaine J. Morgan (R-Dist. 34, Hopkinton, Charlestown, Exeter, Richmond, West Greenwich) announced her strong opposition to a state-run program that would allow the Department of Environmental Management to buy farmland and resell it below cost to new farmers. The proposal stems from a 2014 bond question that voters approved that permitted \$3 million to be used to “protect the state’s working farms.” Morgan said she is concerned the plan DEM favors is too loosely defined and has problems.

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-30-

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