

Jan. 9, 2026

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>



- **Speaker Shekarchi lays out House priorities for 2026**  
Speaker of the House K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) convened the 2026 session of the House of Representatives, preparing members for the challenges of mitigating the impact of federal changes on the state budget. He told the chamber that health care will continue to be at the top of the agenda, and the House will be laser focused on increasing accessibility and lowering costs in 2026. He also said the chamber would continue its focus on housing and home energy costs, emphasizing the need to listen to the community and striving to meet the state's needs.  
[Click here to read Speaker Shekarchi's remarks.](#)
- **President Lawson identifies priorities as Senate session convenes**  
Senate President Valarie J. Lawson (D-Dist. 14, East Providence) gavelled in the 2026 legislative session, emphasizing the importance of working together constructively to address Rhode Islanders' needs in the face of uncertainty at the federal level. She announced that her leadership team would soon be introducing legislation aimed at shoring up education, small business and health care, with a particular focus on stabilizing the state's hospitals and health care workforce, especially primary care providers.  
[Click here to read President Lawson's remarks.](#)
- **General Assembly honors victims of Brown University shooting**  
The House and Senate each passed resolutions ([2026-H 7000](#), [2026-H 7001](#), [2026-S 2001](#)) honoring the victims of the Dec. 13 shooting at Brown University and commending the first responders to the tragedy. Each chamber also began its Tuesday session with a moment of silence for the victims and their families.

More...

- **McNamara bill would create zero tolerance policies for school hazing**  
Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) introduced legislation ([2026-H 7003](#)) that would compel the Department of Education to develop an anti-hazing policy in conjunction with the Rhode Island Interscholastic League. It would establish zero tolerance for hazing and ensure discipline that is transparent and consistent. The guiding principle behind the policy would be that hazing, bullying and harassment have no place in any school environment.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Morales and Stewart call on governor to fully fund libraries in budget**  
Representatives David Morales (D-Dist. 7, Providence) and Jennifer Stewart (D-Dist. 59, Pawtucket) are calling on Gov. Dan McKee to fulfill the state's obligation to fully fund Rhode Island's public libraries in his forthcoming budget proposal.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **McEntee appointed chairwoman of House Judiciary Committee**  
Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) appointed Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee (D-Dist. 33, South Kingstown, Narragansett) as the new chairwoman of the House Judiciary Committee. She has served as the committee's first vice chair for the last several legislative sessions. Speaker Shekarchi has also elevated Rep. Jason Knight (D-Dist. 67, Barrington, Warren) from second vice chair to first vice chair, and Rep. Matthew S. Dawson (D-Dist. 65, East Providence) to second vice chair.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Shallcross Smith appointed chairwoman of House Small Business Committee**  
Speaker of the House K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) has appointed Rep. Mary Ann Shallcross Smith (D-Dist. 46, Lincoln, Pawtucket) to serve as chairwoman of the House Committee on Small Business. The committee considers legislation relating to the streamlining of licenses and permits, eliminating or decreasing bureaucratic steps and delays and uncoordinated or duplicative reviews and filings, and reducing associated added costs to businesses.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Famiglietti attends first Senate session, receives committee assignments**  
Sen. Stefano V. Famiglietti (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) attended his first meeting of the Rhode Island Senate as the chamber convened for 2026. Senator Famiglietti was elected in August to fill a vacancy created in District 4 by the passing of Senate President Dominick L. Ruggiero. He was appointed to serve on the Committee on Commerce, the Committee on Labor and the Committee on Housing and Municipal Government.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Legislative leaders join Interfaith Poverty Vigil**  
House Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) and Senate President (D-Dist. 14, East Providence) both spoke at the 18<sup>th</sup> annual Rhode Island Interfaith Poverty Vigil held at the State House. The event organized by [RI Interfaith Coalition To Reduce Poverty](#) brings together members of churches throughout the state to rally

support for legislation to improve the lives of disadvantaged Rhode Islanders.

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