

Jan. 15, 2021

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>



- **House elects Shekarchi Speaker, begins 2021 with new leaders, 14 new members**
The House of Representatives elected Rep. K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) as House Speaker as it began the 2021 session with 14 new members. The House Democrats also have a new Majority Leader, Rep. Christopher R. Blazejewski (D-Dist. 2, Providence); new Majority Whip, Rep. Katherine S. Kazarian (D-Dist. 63, East Providence); and new Deputy Majority Whip, Rep. Mia Ackerman, (D-Dist. 45, Cumberland, Lincoln).
[Click here to see news release on Speaker's election.](#)
[Click here to see news release on new Democratic leadership team.](#)
- **Senate elects leadership; new committee chairs appointed; eight new members**
Sen. Dominick J. Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) was once again elected President of the Senate. Also on the leadership team are Majority Leader Michael J. McCaffrey (D-Dist. 29, Warwick), Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence) and Deputy Majority Whip Ana B. Quezada (D-Dist. 2, Providence). Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick) was elected President Pro Tempore, and Sen. Roger A. Picard (D-Dist. 20, Woonsocket, Cumberland) was elected Deputy President Pro Tempore. New committee chairs include Sen. V. Susan Sosnowski (D-Dist. 37, South Kingstown, New Shoreham), who will helm the Commerce Committee; Sen. Sandra Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket) will lead the Education Committee; Sen. Dawn Euer (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown) will chair the Environment and Agriculture Committee; Sen. Ryan W. Pearson (D-Dist. 19, Cumberland, Lincoln) will chair the Finance Committee; Sen. Cynthia A. Coyne (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence) will chair the Judiciary Committee; and Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Newport,

More...

Tiverton, Little Compton) will head up the Rules, Government Ethics and Oversight Committee. Eight new members of the Senate were inaugurated.

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- **Lima, Corvese announce bills on lieutenant governor vacancies**
Rep. Charlene Lima (D-Dist. 14, Cranston, Providence) and Rep. Arthur Corvese (D-Dist. 55, North Providence) are each introducing bills to delineate how the lieutenant governor is to be replaced if he or she vacates the office. Current state law does not address the situation, which will occur if the U.S. Senate confirms Gov. Gina Raimondo as U.S. Commerce Secretary and Lt. Gov. Daniel McKee becomes governor. Representative Lima's bill would require a special election. Representative Corvese's bill ([2021-H 5000](#)) would require the General Assembly to elect a new lieutenant governor in Grand Committee, which is the existing process for replacing a lieutenant governor-elect who cannot serve.
[Click here to see Representative Corvese's news release.](#)
[Click here to see Representative Lima's news release.](#)
- **Senate, House resolutions condemn Capitol violence, call for Trump's removal**
The Senate passed and the House is set to vote on resolutions condemning the violent invasion of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 and calling for President Donald Trump's removal from office for his encouragement of it and his other attempts to overturn the election results. The Senate resolution ([2021-S 0008](#)) is sponsored by Sen. Dawn Euer (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown) and the House resolution ([2021-H 5005](#)) is sponsored by Rep. Brandon Potter (D-Dist. 16, Cranston).
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate President Ruggiero bill would place moratorium on for-profit hospitals**
President of the Senate Dominick J. Ruggiero (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) filed legislation ([2021-S 0007](#)) to impose a one-year moratorium on hospital conversions involving for-profit corporations as the acquiree or acquiror.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senator Quezada bill would raise minimum wage to \$15 over four years**
Sen. Ana B. Quezada (D-Dist. 2, Providence) has introduced legislation ([2021-S 0001](#)) that would increase Rhode Island's minimum wage from \$11.50 to \$15 over a four-year period.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Sen. McCaffrey, Rep. Kazarian bills would change marriage solemnizations**
Senate Majority Leader Michael J. McCaffrey (D-Dist. 29, Warwick) and House Majority Whip Katherine S. Kazarian (D-Dist. 63, East Providence) introduced legislation ([2021-S 0014](#)) that would allow the governor to designate any person who is eligible to vote to officiate at a wedding ceremony within the state on a particular day and within a particular city or town. The authorization would expire upon completion of the marriage. A fee in the amount of \$25 would be a prerequisite and would be payable to the secretary of state, or a fee of \$20 for applications that are submitted electronically.
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Rep. Williams calls for granting driver's licenses for undocumented residents**
Rep. Anastasia P. Williams (D-Dist. 9, Providence) is calling on Gov. Gina Raimondo to issue an executive order that would grant driver's licenses to undocumented residents before she leaves the state to serve in the incoming Biden administration.
[Click here to see news release](#)

- **Legislators' alarm leads to cancellation of \$760,000 contract**
Rep. Patricia A. Serpa, Chairwoman of the House Oversight Committee (D-Dist. 27, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick) and Rep. William W. O'Brien (D-Dist. 54, North Providence) were both alarmed and questioned the recently revealed \$760,000 ten-week contract to out of state consultants charged with analyzing the finances of cash-strapped Rhode Island College. The contract was canceled this week after the legislators voiced their concerns.
[Click here to see Serpa release](#)
[Click here to see O'Brien release](#)

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