

March 4, 2022

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>



- **Cannabis legalization bill introduced**

Sen. Joshua Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence) and Rep. Scott A. Slater (D-Dist. 10, Providence) introduced a comprehensive bill to legalize, regulate and tax recreational cannabis sales in Rhode Island. The legislation ([2022-S 2430](#), [2022-H 7593](#)) would legalize the sale of up to 1 ounce of cannabis for those age 21 and up, and allow individuals to grow plants at home, with no more than 10 ounces for personal use kept in a primary residence, effective Oct. 1. The bill also includes social equity provisions to reduce barriers to participation for those communities that have long been disproportionately affected by cannabis prohibition, and allow easy expungement of prior convictions for misdemeanor and felony cannabis possession for amounts that have been decriminalized.

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

- **Bills to boost RI's restaurant industry signed into law**

Two measures to strengthen Rhode Island's restaurant industry were signed into law. The first bill ([2022-S 2153aa](#), [2022-H 7209A](#)), sponsored by Senate President Pro Tempore Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick) and Rep. Jacquelyn Baginski (D-Dist. 17, Cranston), will permanently allow restaurants and brewpubs to sell wine, beer and mixed drinks with takeout food orders. The second bill ([2022-H 7095](#), [2022-S 2134](#)), sponsored by Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee (D-Dist. 33, South Kingstown, Narragansett) and Sen. Alana M. DiMario (D-Dist. 36, Narragansett, North Kingstown), extends a provision that assists restaurants in offering outdoor dining.

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More...

- **Rep. O'Brien and Sen. Murray introduce animal protection bills**  
Rep. William W. O'Brien (D-Dist. 54, North Providence) and Sen. Melissa A. Murray (D-Dist. 24, Woonsocket, North Smithfield) have introduced legislation ([2022-H 7574](#), [2022-S 2445](#)) that prohibits the declawing of a cat or other animal unless a licensed veterinarian has determined that the procedure is necessary for a therapeutic purpose. Representative O'Brien also introduced legislation ([2022-H 7412](#)) that makes it illegal to conduct, sponsor, walk, exhibit or operate a traveling show or circus that includes live wild or other exotic animals on any public or private land in Rhode Island; legislation ([2022-H 7572](#)) that would prohibit a person convicted of killing an animal, or of unnecessary cruelty to animals amounting to torture, from owning or exercising control of an animal for life; and a bill ([2022-H 7573](#)) that would create a legal process for former cohabitating parties to determine ownership of pets through the District Court.  
[Click here to see O'Brien release.](#)  
[Click here to see Murray news release.](#)
  
- **Sen. DiPalma and Rep. McNamara introduce bill to study Board of Education**  
Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Little Compton, Newport, Tiverton) and Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) have introduced legislation ([2022-S 2442](#), [2022-H 7784](#)) that would create a joint study commission to examine the governance structure of Rhode Island's public education system. The purpose of the commission would be to study, review, and make recommendations on how to most efficiently and effectively administer the governance of the Pre-K through 16 public education system in Rhode Island.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
  
- **Both chambers pass resolutions condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine**  
Both the House and the Senate passed resolutions condemning Russia's attack on Ukraine and voicing support for Ukraine and Ukrainians in Rhode Island. The resolutions ([2022-S 2429](#), [2022-H 7592](#)) were sponsored by Sen. Melissa A. Murray (D-Dist. 24, Woonsocket, North Smithfield) and Sen. Leonidas P. Raptakis (D-Dist. 33, Coventry, East Greenwich, West Greenwich) in the Senate and Rep. Raymond A. Hull (D-Dist. 6, Providence, North Providence) in the House.  
[Click here for Senate release.](#)  
[Click here for House release.](#)
  
- **Rep. Carson bill would help parents navigate special education**  
Rep. Lauren H. Carson (D-Dist. 75, Newport) has introduced legislation ([2022-H 7536](#)) to create an ombudsman for special education, independent of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, to ensure school districts throughout the state meet the standards required to comply with individualized education programs for students with disabilities.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
  
- **Rep. Morales, Sen. Mack submit bills to promote peace**  
Rep. David Morales (D-Dist. 7, Providence) and Sen. Tiara Mack (D-Dist. 6,

Providence) have introduced two bills to promote international peace. The bills would require the State Investment Commission to issue a report detailing the extent to which the state pension fund is invested in military weapons manufacturing ([2022-H 7482](#)), and encourage the federal government to pursue nuclear disarmament for the United States and worldwide ([2022-H 7518](#) , [2022-S 2423](#)).  
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Legislators visit Mass. adolescent treatment facility, considered model for RI**  
Senators Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Little Compton, Newport, Tiverton), Valarie J. Lawson (D-Dist. 14, East Providence), Sandra Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket), Alana M. DiMario (D-Dist. 36, Narragansett, North Kingstown) and Joshua Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence) and Representatives Julie A. Casimiro (D-Dist. 31, North Kingstown, Exeter), Grace Diaz (D-Dist. 11, Providence), Thomas E. Noret (D-Dist.25, Coventry, West Warwick) and Anastasia P. Williams (D-Dist. 9, Providence) traveled to Marlborough, Mass., to visit Glenhaven Academy, a residential treatment facility for adolescents who've experienced trauma, mental health issues, educational challenges or behavioral difficulties. Rhode Island currently has no such residential treatment facility of its own for girls, and the legislators said they would like to see a facility similar to Glenhaven Academy for children in state care here.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Phillips bill would explore building solar panels on highway medians**  
Rep. Robert D. Phillips (D-Dist. 51, Woonsocket, Cumberland) has introduced legislation ([2022-H 6657](#)) that would explore the possibility of building solar panels on the median strips of the state's roads, including Interstate highways, RI-Route 146, carports at state parking lots, and other locations. It would also direct the General Assembly to seek to utilize funds received from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 in making appropriations to support this project and to implement the recommendations of the commission.  
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