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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>



- **Senate approves bills easing limits on retired teachers serving as substitutes**
The Senate passed amended legislation sponsored by Sen. Bridget Valverde (D-Dist. 35, North Kingstown, South Kingstown, East Greenwich) and Rep. William W. O'Brien (D-Dist. 54, North Providence) to help address the current shortage of substitute educators in Rhode Island schools. The legislation ([2023-S 0020A](#), [2023-H 5040A](#)) temporarily removes the limit on the number of days that retired teachers, administrators and staff members can return to work as substitute employees during a school year. The legislation now moves to the House of Representatives.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **House OKs Edwards bill to limit vehicle inspections to state inspection stations**
The House of Representatives approved legislation ([2023-H 5034](#)) introduced by Majority Floor Manager John G. Edwards (D-Dist. 70, Tiverton) that would provide that only facilities located within Rhode Island be eligible for permits to operate as official inspection stations for the inspection of vehicles and the issuance of official certificates of inspection and approval. The legislation now moves to the Senate, where similar legislation ([2023-S 0434](#)) has been introduced by Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Newport, Tiverton, Little Compton).
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- **Vella-Wilkinson bills would create state tribal recognition**
Rep. Camille F.J. Vella-Wilkinson (D-Dist. 21, Warwick) has introduced two bills that would create a procedure for the state to recognize Native American tribes. The first bill ([2023-H 5020](#)) would provide a procedure for a tribe to petition the state for recognition by providing the House of Representatives with certain documentation.

More...

The General Assembly could then forward the petition to the governor for enactment through legislation. The second bill ([2023-H 5021](#)) would officially recognize the Seaconke Wampanoag tribe for the limited purposes of assisting in establishing eligibility for federal benefits and to protect the tribe in preserving artifacts, ceremonies and practices.

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

▪ **Pearson seeks reforms to state’s education funding formula**

Senate Majority Leader Ryan W. Pearson (D-Dist. 19, Cumberland, Lincoln) has introduced legislation ([2023-S 0456](#)) that would amend Rhode Island’s education funding formula to ensure its sustainability and meet the needs of today’s students. The bill would change the Student Success Factor calculation within the funding formula to include multilingual learners, providing an accurate and reliable funding stream to support these students.

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▪ **McGaw submits bill to enable composting as an alternative to burial, cremation**

After hearing from numerous constituents interested in reducing their impact on the planet in perpetuity, Rep. Michelle McGaw (D-Dist. 71, Portsmouth, Tiverton, Little Compton) has introduced legislation ([2023-H 6045](#)) to allow natural organic reduction — sometimes referred to as “human composting” — as a greener alternative to cremation or burial.

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▪ **Rep. Spears introduces package to help adults with developmental disabilities**

Rep. Tina Spears (D-Dist. 36, Charlestown, Westerly, South Kingstown, New Shoreham) has introduced three bills to help adults with developmental disabilities. One bill ([2023-H 5996](#)) would remove income limits for people with developmental disabilities to qualify for Medicaid. A second bill ([2023-H 5633](#)) would require the state to provide inflation increases to individuals living with developmental disabilities on Supplemental Security Income (SSI). A third bill ([2023-H 6119](#)) would increase the Medicaid rate of reimbursement for ambulance and wheelchair van services.

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▪ **Deputy Whip Ackerman introduces bill to help cancer patients**

House Deputy Majority Whip Mia A. Ackerman (D-Dist. 45, Cumberland, Lincoln) is sponsoring legislation that would let cancer patients meet their deductible faster by banning an insurance company practice called “copay accumulator adjustments.” This would help patients afford life-saving medications and treatment. She represented the House on Tuesday at the annual Cancer Action Network’s 2023 Cancer Action Day Event.

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

▪ **Carson, Gu sponsor bill to let cities/towns regulate short term rentals**

Rep. Lauren H. Carson (D-Dist. 75, Newport) and Sen. Victoria Gu (D-Dist. 38, Charlestown, Westerly, South Kingstown) have introduced legislation that would allow municipalities to regulate short-term rentals within their borders. Under current law, the state prohibits cities and towns from restricting short-term rentals. The bill

([2023-S 0310](#), [2023-H 6097](#)) would remove that pre-emption provision and allow municipalities to pass local ordinances to regulate or restrict short-term rental units. [Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **International Women’s Day celebrated at State House**

Sen. Sandra Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket) and Rep. Karen Alzate (D-Dist. 60, Pawtucket, Central Falls) hosted three female Pawtucket students at the State House to serve as “Legislators for the Day” in honor of International Women’s Day. Senator Cano also sponsored a resolution ([2023-S 0458](#)) in the Senate recognizing International Women’s Day and Rep. Teresa A. Tanzi (D-Dist. Narragansett, South Kingstown) introduced the resolution ([2023-H 6134](#)) in the House.

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