

March 24, 2023

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>



- **New law temporarily lifts limit on retired educators serving as substitutes**  
The General Assembly passed and the governor signed 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 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 the school year. The law limits the use of retirees to situations when schools have tried to find other qualified educators to fill open positions. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Sen. Acosta and Rep. Giraldo introduce legislation to address teacher shortages**  
Sen. Jonathon Acosta (D-Dist. 16, Central Falls, Pawtucket) and Rep. Joshua J. Giraldo (D-Dist. 56, Central Falls) have introduced legislation ([2023-S 0542](#), [2023-H 6170](#)) to address the statewide teacher shortages by creating postsecondary tuition assistance for teaching fields. In particular, science and math teachers for grades seven through 12 are cited in the legislation as critical areas in need of more teachers. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Batista introduces legislation to reform Law Enforcement Officers Bill of Rights**  
Rep. José F. Batista (D-Dist. 12, Providence) introduced legislation ([2023-H 6200](#)) to reform the Law Enforcement Officers Bill of Rights to empower police chiefs to enforce discipline for misconduct within their departments in a timely manner. The bill would also protect the public from having to provide back pay to officers who are acquitted of criminal charges but ultimately fired for misconduct.

More...

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- **Environment, labor advocates support bill for net-zero public schools by 2035**  
Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick) and Rep. Arthur Handy (D-Dist. 18, Cranston) spoke at a press conference sponsored by Climate Jobs Rhode Island, a coalition of over 30 labor unions, environmental organizations and community groups, in support of legislation ([2023-H 6008](#), [2023-S 0537](#)) sponsored by Representative Handy and Senate Majority Leader Ryan W. Pearson (D-Dist. 19, Cumberland, Lincoln) requiring the decarbonization of all public K-12 school buildings by 2035 using strong labor and equity standards.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Solomon bills would increase penalties for theft of catalytic converters**  
Rep. Joseph J. Solomon Jr. (D-Dist. 22, Warwick) has introduced two bills related to the theft of catalytic converters. The first ([2023-H 5841](#)) would mandate a bill of sale, eliminate cash payments and require the attorney general to suspend the license of any violator of the law. A conviction would be a felony subject to fine and imprisonment. The second bill ([2023-H 5842](#)) would establish an interstate compact that would regulate the purchase and sale of catalytic converters.  
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- **Chairwoman DiMario bill would promote affordable, clean, reliable energy**  
Sen. Alana DiMario (D-Dist. 36, Narragansett, North Kingstown, New Shoreham), chairwoman of the Senate Committee on Environment and Agriculture, is proposing an innovative plan to ensure renewable energy projects such as solar farms are built without increasing electric rates or clearing Rhode Island's forests. The legislation ([2023-S 0504](#)) would establish a new state program called Renewable Ready that would prepare certain sites for renewable energy development. Eligible locations would include rooftops of large buildings, properties adjacent to major roads and brownfield sites.  
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- **Rep. Boylan introduces bill requiring solar on new construction**  
Rep. Jennifer Boylan (D-Dist. 66, Barrington, East Providence) has introduced legislation ([2023-H 5851](#)) that would require most new construction to include solar panels. It would instruct the Rhode Island Building Code Commission to create different regulations for single-family dwellings, multi-family dwellings, large commercial buildings and large parking lots. Developers could apply for an exemption in certain circumstances.  
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- **Rep. Brien sales tax holiday bill would allow for 'Christmas in July in RI'**  
Rep. Jon D. Brien (I-Dist. 49, Woonsocket, North Smithfield) has introduced legislation ([2023-H 5805](#)) that would create an annual sales tax holiday. Touted as "Christmas in July in RI," the bill would create a sales and use tax holiday for the second Saturday and Sunday in July annually, exempting items below \$2,500 from the state's 7-percent sales tax.  
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- **Sen. Ujifusa introduces bills to lower prescription drug costs**  
Sen. Linda Ujifusa (D-Dist. 11, Portsmouth, Bristol) has introduced two bills to help protect Rhode Island patients and taxpayers from the harmful activities of pharmacy benefit managers. One bill ([2023 S-0106](#)) would regulate several current industry practices that harm consumers and taxpayers. Rep. John J. Lombardi (D-Dist. 8, Providence) has introduced companion legislation ([2023-H 5078](#)) in the House. A second bill ([2023-S 0581](#)) would prohibit the Executive Office of Health and Human Services from contracting with managed care organizations that subcontract with pharmacy benefit managers. Rep. Joseph J. Solomon Jr. (D-Dist. 22, Warwick) has introduced companion legislation ([2023-H 5988](#)) in the House.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
  
- **Gu and Casimiro seek to protect seniors from scammers**  
Sen. Victoria Gu (D-Dist. 38, Charlestown, Westerly, South Kingstown) and Rep. Julie Casimiro (D-Dist. 31, North Kingstown, Exeter) are pushing new legislation to educate consumers so they don't become victims of gift card scams. The legislation ([2023-S 0759](#), [2023-H 5732](#)) would require any store that sells gift cards to post a conspicuous notice at or near the point of sale that cautions the purchaser about prepaid card scams and instructs the purchaser on what to do if they suspect they might be a potential victim of such a scam.  
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