

April 2, 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 passes bill that would compensate the wrongly imprisoned**  
The House of Representatives passed legislation ([2021-H 5470A](#)) introduced by Rep. Patricia Serpa (D-Dist. 27, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick) that would give compensation to innocent people who have spent time behind bars but were later released when new evidence shows they were not guilty. The measure now moves to the Senate where similar legislation ([2021-S 0672](#)) has been introduced by Sen. Cynthia A. Coyne (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence).  
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- **Senate votes to prohibit ‘source of income’ housing discrimination**  
The Senate approved legislation ([2021-S 0561](#)) sponsored by Sen. Meghan E. Kallman (D-Dist. 15, Pawtucket, North Providence) to prohibit discrimination against tenants because of the source of their income. The bill is primarily aimed at preventing landlords from refusing to rent to Rhode Islanders who receive Section 8 Housing Choice vouchers. The bill now heads to the House, which on March 2 approved companion legislation ([2021-H 5257aa](#)) sponsored by Rep. Anastasia P. Williams (D-Dist. 9, Providence).  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate OKs legislation that protects families with parents that have disabilities**  
The Senate has passed legislation ([2021-S 0056](#)) introduced by Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Little Compton, Newport, Tiverton) that precludes the disability of a parent from serving as a basis for denial or restriction in matters involving a child's welfare, foster care, family law, guardianship and adoption. Rep.

More...

Terri Cortvriend (Dist. 72, Portsmouth Middletown) has introduced the companion legislation ([2021-H 5394](#)) in the House of Representatives.

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▪ **Senate passes bill excluding chronic intractable pain from medication guidelines**

The Senate has passed legislation ([2021-S 0384A](#)) introduced by Sen. Valarie J. Lawson (D-Dist. 14, East Providence) that would exclude chronic intractable pain from the definition of “acute pain management” for the purposes of prescribing opioid medication. The legislation acknowledges that every patient and their needs is different, especially those suffering from chronic pain. The measure now moves to the House, which passed similar legislation ([2021-H 5247](#)) introduced by Rep. Gregg Amore (D-Dist. 65, East Providence) on March 9.

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▪ **Senate OKs bill that protects children from being left alone in vehicles**

The Senate has passed a bill ([2021-S 0128](#)) introduced by Sen. Leonidas P. Raptakis’ (D-Dist. 33, Coventry, West Greenwich, East Greenwich) that would protect minors left unattended in a motor vehicle. The legislation repeals the requirement that law enforcement issue only verbal warnings of the risks to persons leaving a child under the age of seven unattended in a motor vehicle. Rep. Patricia A. Serpa (D-Dist. 27, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick) has introduced the companion bill ([2021-H 5184](#)) in the House of Representatives.

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▪ **Senate passes bill requiring cultural competency training for state workers**

The Senate approved legislation ([2021-S 0428](#)) introduced by Sen. Sandra Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket) that would require the Office of Diversity, Equity and Opportunity (ODEO) to provide all state and municipal employees annual training in cultural competency. Rep. Joshua J. Giraldo (D-Dist. 56, Central Falls) has introduced the companion legislation ([2021-H 5752](#)) in the House of Representatives.

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▪ **Rep. Batista, Sen. Acosta introduce police reform legislation**

Sen. Jonathon Acosta (D-Dist. 16, Central Falls, Pawtucket) and Rep. José F. Batista (D-Dist. 12, Providence) have introduced the Rishod K. Gore Justice in Policing Act of 2021 ([2021-S 0597](#), [2021-H 5993](#)) to institute critical reforms including a statewide mandate for police body cameras, a requirement that police intervene in and report severe misconduct by fellow officers, and personal liability for police officers who engage in willful misconduct.

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▪ **Sen. Picard bill would have governor, lieutenant governor run as a ticket**

With Rhode Island in the midst of transitions in the governor’s and lieutenant governor’s offices, Sen. Roger A. Picard (D-Dist. 20, Woonsocket, Cumberland) has once again introduced legislation ([2021-S 0274](#)) to ask voters whether they wish to amend the state constitution to elect the governor and lieutenant governor together as one ticket. The bill ([2021-H 5742](#)) has been introduced in the House by Rep. Robert

D. Phillips (D-Dist. 51, Woonsocket, Cumberland).

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▪ **Rep. Handy, Sen. Murray legislation would raise RI Works assistance**

Backed by a coalition of community, faith and antipoverty advocates, Sen. Melissa A. Murray (D-Dist. 24, Woonsocket, North Smithfield) and Rep. Arthur Handy (D-Dist. 18, Cranston) have introduced legislation ([2021-S 0226](#), [2021-H 5683](#)) to provide the first rate increase in 30 years, as well as other benefit improvements, for the Rhode Island Works Program, the state's cash assistance and work-readiness program for low-income children and their families.

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▪ **McNamara bill would make school social services Medicaid eligible**

Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) has introduced legislation ([2021-H 5067](#)) that would make services provided by school social workers and certified school psychologists eligible for federal Medicaid reimbursement.

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