

April 9, 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>



- **General Assembly approves Act on Climate**

The General Assembly has approved legislation sponsored by Sen. Dawn Euer (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown) and Rep. Lauren H. Carson (D-Dist. 75, Newport) to update Rhode Island's climate-emission reduction goals and to make them enforceable. The 2021 Act on Climate ([2021-S 0078A](#), [2021-H 5445A](#)) will make the state's climate goals outlined in the Resilient Rhode Island Act of 2014 more ambitious and updated with current science. Under the bill, the state would develop a plan to reduce all climate emissions from transportation, buildings and heating, and electricity used economywide in the state to 10 percent below 1990 levels this year, 45 percent below 1990 levels by 2030, 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2040 and net-zero by 2050. Gov. Daniel McKee is expected to sign the legislation Saturday. [Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Senate OKs bill to expand Hospital Conversion Act criteria**

The Senate passed legislation introduced by Majority Leader Michael J. McCaffrey (D-Dist. 29, Warwick) that would ensure the hospital merger process is thorough and expand factors that must be taken into consideration. The bill ([2021-S 0443Aaa](#)) would prohibit expedited review when the combined hospitals after a merger would account for 20 percent or more of the hospitals in Rhode Island, as they would under the Lifespan-Care New England proposal. The measure now moves to the House of Representatives for consideration. [Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Senate passes Real Jobs Rhode Island Act**

The Senate passed legislation ([2021-S 0613](#)) introduced by President Dominick J.

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Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) that would make the successful Real Jobs Rhode Island program permanent. Real Jobs Rhode Island is an industry-led system to advance the skills of the state's workforce, grow the state's economy and increase sustainable employment for middle class working families. The measure now moves to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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

▪ **House OKs bill for statewide standards in personal finance instruction**

The House of Representatives passed legislation introduced by Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) that calls for statewide standards in personal finance. The Securing the Financial Future for All Students Act ([2021-H 5073](#)) would provide that the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education be encouraged to maintain, publish and update statewide standards for instruction of personal finance in public high schools. The measure now moves to the Senate for consideration.

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

▪ **House passes Deputy Speaker Lima's bill to ease quorum delays**

The House of Representatives approved legislation ([2021-H 5568A](#)) sponsored by Deputy Speaker Charlene M. Lima (D-Dist. 14, Cranston, Providence) to reduce procedural delays that could hold up the permitting process for development. The bill would enable local planning boards to establish a quorum for votes more easily, thus preventing potential delays in development matters before them. This is the fourth piece of legislation passed from Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi's (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) seven-bill housing package, which was introduced in March. The measure now moves to the Senate, where similar legislation ([2021-S 0307](#)) has been introduced by Majority Leader Michael J. McCaffrey (D-Dist. 29, Warwick).

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▪ **House approves Potter bill to continue reports on overdoses**

The House of Representatives approved legislation ([2021-H 6014](#)) sponsored by Rep. Brandon C. Potter (D-Dist. 16, Cranston) to permanently require the state to analyze overdose deaths in the state to help identify ways to reduce their prevalence. In response to the opioid overdose epidemic, in 2018 the state enacted a temporary requirement for the state Medical Examiners Office that a team of health and public safety professionals must review each overdose death in the state for the purpose of examining emerging trends in overdose. The bill now heads to the Senate, where Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence) is sponsoring its companion bill ([2021-S 0713](#)).

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▪ **Proposed legislation would give tax relief to unemployment recipients**

Legislation ([2021-S 0764](#), [2021-H 6207](#)) introduced by Senate Minority Leader Dennis L. Algieri (R-Dist. 38, Westerly, Charlestown, South Kingstown) and House Deputy Speaker Charlene M. Lima (D-Dist. 14, Cranston, Providence) would exempt the first \$10,200 in unemployment benefits from state taxes. The R.I. Division of Taxation will tax 100 percent of the unemployment benefits collected in 2020 despite

the fact that the Internal Revenue Service has exempted \$10,200 from federal taxation.

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

- **Committee approves nomination of Sabina Matos for lieutenant governor**
The Senate Judiciary Committee, chaired by Sen. Cynthia A. Coyne (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence), unanimously approved Gov. Daniel McKee's appointment of Providence City Council President Sabina Matos to the position of lieutenant governor. The nomination now heads to the full Senate for confirmation.

-30-

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