

May 3, 2024

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, House OK bill to provide regular reporting on the Washington Bridge**  
The Senate and House passed legislation ([2024-S 2727A](#), [2024-H 7759A](#)) introduced by Senate Majority Whip Valarie J. Lawson (D-Dist. 14, East Providence) and House Majority Whip Katherine S. Kazarian (D-Dist. 63, East Providence, Pawtucket) to require regular monthly updates from the Rhode Island Department of Transportation on the state of the Washington Bridge. Each bill will now head to the opposite chamber for consideration.  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Bills from housing package approved by House of Representatives**  
The House approved three bills included in Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi's (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) 2024 housing package. One ([2024-H 7983A](#)) sponsored by Rep. Cherie Cruz (D-Dist. 58, Pawtucket) clarifies the makeup and structure of the State Building Code Office and the role of the State Building Code Commissioner. Another ([2024-H 7982](#)), sponsored by Rep. Terri Cortvriend (D-Dist. 72, Middletown, Portsmouth), amends provisions pertaining to wetland buffers and projects for development, redevelopment, construction or rehabilitation. The third ([2024-H 7984A](#)), sponsored by Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee (D-Dist. 33, South Kingstown, Narragansett), allows municipalities to count mobile homes as affordable housing under certain conditions. The bills have been sent to the Senate.  
[Click here to see Cruz release.](#)  
[Click here to see Cortvriend release.](#)  
[Click here to see McEntee release.](#)

More...

- **Senate OKs Lauria bill to help sexual assault victims access fund**  
The Senate approved legislation ([2024-S 2767A](#)) sponsored by Sen. Pamela J. Lauria (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence) to enable victims of sexual assault to submit a medical forensic exam in lieu of a police report to establish eligibility for funds from the Crime Victim Compensation Program. Current law requires a police report for eligibility, but 70% of sexual assaults go unreported. The legislation now goes to the House, where Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee (D-Dist. 33, South Kingstown, Narragansett) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2024-H 7449](#)).  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate approves Bissailon bill enabling more people to expunge misdemeanors**  
The Senate approved legislation ([2024-S 2454](#)) sponsored by Sen. Jacob Bissailon (D-Dist. 1, Providence) removing a restriction that prevents those with a felony conviction from having up to five misdemeanors expunged from their record, as others can. The bill now goes to the House, where Rep. Jason Knight (D-Dist. 67, Barrington, Warren) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2024-H 7053](#)).  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate passes Cano bill requiring coverage for diagnosing and treating infertility**  
The Senate approved legislation ([2024-S 2396](#)) sponsored by Sen. Sandra Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket) that mandates all insurance contracts, plans or policies provide coverage for the expense of diagnosing and treating infertility. The measure now heads to the House, where Rep. Karen Alzate (D-Dist. 60, Pawtucket, Central Falls) has introduced similar legislation ([2024-H 7878](#)).  
[Click here to see news release](#)
- **House passes Baginski bill to prohibit synthetic media 90 days before elections**  
The House passed legislation ([2024-H 7387A](#)) sponsored by Rep. Jacquelyn Baginski (D-Dist. 17, Cranston) that would prohibit the dissemination of “synthetic media” for 90 days before an election. Synthetic media is defined as an image, an audio recording or a video recording of an individual’s appearance, speech or conduct that has been intentionally manipulated with digital technology to create a realistic but false image, audio or video. The bill now heads to the Senate, where Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Little Compton, Newport, Tiverton) has introduced the legislation ([2024-S 2456](#)).  
[Click here to see news release](#)
- **Senate passes LaMountain bill to protect employees’ freedom of speech**  
The Senate passed legislation ([2024-S 2785](#)) introduced by Sen. Matthew L. LaMountain (D-Dist. 31, Warwick, Cranston) that would protect the rights of employees in the workplace relating to free speech, assembly and religion as well as attendance at employer-sponsored meetings regarding political or religious matters. The measure now moves to the House, where similar legislation ([2024-H 7106](#)) has been introduced by Rep. Robert E. Craven (D-Dist. 32, North Kingstown).  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate approves Chairwoman Euer’s Healthcare Provider Shield Act**  
The Senate voted to approve Senate Judiciary Committee Chairwoman Dawn Euer’s (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown) Healthcare Provider Shield Act ([2024-S 2262A](#)) to

protect medical providers who provide transgender and reproductive health care services in Rhode Island from civil or criminal suits from other states. The measure now moves to the House, where Rep. John G. Edwards (D-Dist. 70, Tiverton) has introduced similar legislation ([2024-H 7577](#)).

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

- **Edwards bill takes aim at ‘deepfake’ porn; would include AI digital images**  
Rep. John G. Edwards (D-Dist. 70, Tiverton) is sponsoring legislation ([2024-H 8129](#)) that takes aim at “deepfake” porn by amending Rhode Island’s existing revenge pornography statute that was enacted in 2018. It would include visual images that are created or manipulated by digitization, or without the consent of the person, within the purview of the crime of unauthorized dissemination of indecent material.

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

- **Ackerman introduces consumer protection bill for solar industry**  
Deputy Majority Whip Mia A. Ackerman (D-Dist. 45, Cumberland, Lincoln) introduced legislation ([2024-H 7603](#)) to protect consumers and ensure a healthy solar industry by regulating businesses selling home solar systems under the Department of Business Regulation. Similar legislation ([2024-S 2801A](#)) has been introduced in the Senate by Sen. Jacob Bissaillon (D-Dist. 1, Providence).

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

- **Newport legislators submit short-term rental bills**  
Rep. Lauren Carson (D-Dist. 75, Newport) and Sen. Dawn Euer (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown) have introduced legislation aimed at improving regulatory control over the short-term rental industry. Representative Carson is sponsoring legislation ([2024-H 8182](#)) to improve regulatory compliance and transparency and enabling local controls on the industry’s growth, and another bill ([2024-H 8183](#)) to make whole houses and condominiums subject to the hotel tax when rented short-term. She also introduced legislation ([2024-H 8146](#)) to extend a short-term rental study commission she leads, which issued an [interim report](#) this week. Senator Euer’s bill ([2024-S 2020](#)) would allow municipalities to charge a community impact fee of no more than 2% of the total charged to customers by short-term rental, for use on infrastructure, housing units and expenses incurred because of short-term rentals.

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

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