

May 16, 2025

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 Speaker's housing package; Senate OKs other housing bills**  
The House approved and sent to the Senate the final two pieces of legislation in House Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi's (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) 12-bill package to address the housing crisis: his own bill ([2025-H 5804Aaa](#)) to codify the structure of the State Building Code Office and clarify the role of the State Building Code Commissioner, and legislation ([2025-H 5799A](#)) sponsored by Rep. Cherie Cruz (D-Dist. 58, Pawtucket) to allow subdivision of oversized lots if the resulting lots are at least as big as those nearby. The Senate approved and sent to the House legislation ([2025-S 0711](#)) sponsored by Sen. Jacob E. Bissaillon (D-Dist. 1, Providence) to revive a state board created in 1990 but never appointed that brings together leaders in land conservation and affordable housing creation to promote sustainable housing growth. The Senate also approved a bill ([2025-S 0495A](#)) from Sen. Victoria Gu (D-Dist. 38, Westerly, Charlestown, South Kingstown) to create a Housing Champion program to reward municipalities that are actively working to address Rhode Island's housing crisis. Rep. June S. Speakman (D-Dist. 68, Warren, Bristol) has introduced both bills ([2025-H 5310](#), [2025-H 5229](#)) in the House.  
[Click here to see House news release.](#)  
[Click here to see Bissaillon news release.](#)  
[Click here to see Gu news release.](#)
- **Senate approves Valverde bill protecting 340B discount prescription program**  
The Senate approved legislation ([2025-S 0114](#)) sponsored by Sen. Bridget Valverde (D-Dist. 35, North Kingstown, East Greenwich, South Kingstown) to prohibit insurers, pharmacy benefits managers and other payors from engaging in discriminatory practices against safety-net hospitals, clinics and other health care

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provider agencies that purchase prescriptions through the federal 340B discount program, which helps them fund care for the most vulnerable Rhode Islanders. The legislation now goes to the House where companion legislation ([2025-H 5634](#)) is sponsored by Rep. Jon D. Brien (I-Dist. 49, Woonsocket, North Smithfield).  
[Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **Senate OKs bill to prohibit electronic devices during school day**

The Senate approved legislation ([2025-S 0771A](#)) sponsored by Senate Health and Human Services Committee Chairwoman Melissa Murray (D-Dist. 24, Woonsocket, North Smithfield) to require every school in Rhode Island to have a policy on the use of personal electronics that prohibits students from having access to them during the school day. The bill now heads to the House where Rep. Julie A. Casimiro (D-Dist. 31, North Kingstown, Exeter) is sponsoring its companion ([2025-H 5598](#)).  
[Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **Senate passes McKenney's Freedom to Read Act**

The Senate passed the Freedom to Read Act ([2025-S 0238A](#)) introduced by Sen. Mark McKenney (D-Dist. 30, Warwick), which would protect libraries and their patrons from partisan or doctrinal book-banning efforts and affirm the free speech rights of authors, publishers and readers in Rhode Island. The measure now moves to the House where similar legislation ([2025-H 5726](#)) has been introduced by Rep. David Morales (D-Dist. 7, Providence).  
[Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **House OKs Shallcross Smith bill to license speech-language pathology assistants**

The House of Representatives passed legislation ([2025-H 5557A](#)) introduced by Rep. Mary Ann Shallcross Smith (D-Dist. 46, Lincoln, Pawtucket) that seeks to address the shortage of speech-language pathologists in Rhode Island by updating the licensing requirements for their assistants, making them more consistent with educational programs and regulations across the country. The measure now moves to the Senate where similar legislation ([2025-S 0471](#)) has been introduced by Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick).  
[Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **Senate passes bills for emergency medical procedures at public places**

The Senate passed legislation calling for emergency medical devices or procedures to be implemented at public places. The first bill ([2025-S 0343A](#)), introduced by Senate Majority Whip David P. Tikoian (D-Dist. 22, Smithfield, Lincoln, North Providence), would require all full-time lifeguards, park and forest rangers who work at any public beach or facility to be trained in administering opioid antagonists, such as Narcan. The second bill, the David Casey Act ([2025-S 0475A](#)), introduced by Sen. Andrew R. Dimitri (D-Dist. 25, Johnston), would mandate automatic external defibrillators on golf courses. The measures now move to the House where Rep. William W. O'Brien (D-Dist. 54, North Providence) has introduced the Tikoian legislation ([2025-H 5273A](#)) and the David Casey Act ([2025-H 5083A](#)), introduced by Rep. Deborah A. Fellela (D-Dist. 43, Johnston), has already passed the chamber.  
[Click here for Tikoian release.](#)  
[Click here for Dimitri release.](#)

- **Senate OKs Lawson bill to establish limits on grocery self-checkouts**  
The Senate voted to approve legislation ([2025-S 0085A](#)) from Senate President Valarie J. Lawson (D-Dist. 14, East Providence) to establish limits on the use of self-checkout lanes at grocery stores in Rhode Island. The bill now goes to the House for consideration where Rep. Megan L. Cotter (D-Dist. 39, Exeter, Hopkinton, Richmond) has introduced similar legislation ([2025-H 6282](#)).  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate OKs Urso bill to make prescribing medications to treat addiction easier**  
The Senate approved legislation ([2025-S 0271A](#)) from Sen. Lori Urso (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket) to prohibit insurers from delaying or interrupting treatment with medications proven to be effective in treating alcohol and opioid use disorder. The bill now heads to the House where Rep. John G. Edwards (D-Dist. 70, Tiverton) has introduced similar legislation ([2025-H 5024](#)).  
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate approves Leader Ciccone's Workplace Psychological Safety Act**  
The Senate passed legislation ([2025-S 0959A](#)) sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Frank A. Ciccone III (D-Dist. 7, Providence, Johnston) that would provide workers with more protection from bullying and harassment in the workplace. The measure now heads to the House where Rep. John J. Lombardi (D-Dist. 8, Providence) has introduced the legislation ([2025-H 5132](#)).  
[Click here to see news release](#)
- **Senate approves DiPalma bill to lower prescription drug prices**  
The Senate approved legislation ([2025-S 0468aa](#)) sponsored by Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Little Compton, Newport, Tiverton) that would significantly lower the price of many common prescription drugs. The legislation would cap prescription costs at the levels now being negotiated by Medicare at the federal level. The bill now heads to the House where Rep. Teresa A. Tanzi (D-Dist. 34, Narragansett, South Kingstown) has introduced the legislation ([2025-H 5860](#)).  
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