

May 31, 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>



- **House approves bill requiring safe storage of firearms**

The House approved legislation sponsored by Rep. Justine Caldwell (D-Dist. 30, East Greenwich, West Greenwich) and Sen. Pamela J. Lauria (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence) to require safe storage of firearms in Rhode Island. The legislation ([2024-H 7373A](#), [2024-S 2202aa](#)) would require that all firearms, when not in use by the owner or another authorized user, be stored in a locked container or with a tamper-resistant mechanical lock or other safety device engaged. The bills now go to the Senate.

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- **Bill signed to expand crime victims' benefits**

Gov. Dan McKee signed legislation ([2024-H 7747B](#), [2024-S 2777A](#)) sponsored by Rep. Justine A. Caldwell (D-Dist. 30, East Greenwich, West Greenwich) and Sen. Matthew L. LaMountain (D-Dist. 31, Warwick, Cranston) on behalf of Rhode Island General Treasurer James A. Diossa to allow crime victims to use up to \$1,000 of funds awarded through the Crime Victim Compensation Program for home modifications to ensure their future safety.

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- **Senate passes McKenney bill to protect the freedom of public libraries**

The Senate passed legislation ([2024-S 2281](#)) introduced by Sen. Mark McKenney (D-Dist. 30, Warwick) that would encourage and protect the freedom of public libraries to acquire and remove materials without limitations and protect libraries against attempts to ban, censor or otherwise restrict access to books and other materials. The measure now moves to the House, where similar legislation ([2024-H 7386](#)) has been

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introduced by Rep. Jennifer A. Stewart (D-Dist. 59, Pawtucket).

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- **House OKs Noret bill protecting school officials who are threatened with harm**
The House passed legislation ([2024-H 7303](#)) introduced by Rep. Thomas E. Noret (D-Dist. 25, Coventry, West Warwick) that would add school officials to an existing law that makes it a crime to threaten to take the life of, or to inflict bodily harm upon, a public official or a member of his or her immediate family because of the performance or nonperformance of some public duty. The measure now moves to the Senate, where similar legislation ([2024-S 2683](#)) has been introduced by Sen. David P. Tikoian (D-Dist. 22, Smithfield, Lincoln, North Providence).
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- **House passes McNamara’s Attendance for Success Act to combat absenteeism**
The House passed the Attendance for Success Act ([2024-H 8190Aaa](#)) introduced by Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) that would mandate closely tracking absenteeism rates using data and implementing a tiered system of support to address student needs. It also emphasizes improving communication between students, parents and legal guardians to identify and tackle the root causes of absenteeism. The measure now moves to the Senate, where similar legislation ([2024-S 3071](#)) has been introduced by Sen. Sandra Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket).
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- **House passes Rep. Kislak bill to improve IEP process**
The House approved legislation ([2024-H 7721A](#)) sponsored by Rep. Rebecca Kislak (D-Dist. 4, Providence) to make several changes that give parents more insight and control in changes in their child’s individualized education plan (IEP), and set the wheels in motion for a much-needed overhaul of the state’s IEP regulations. The legislation now goes to the Senate, where Sen. Alana M. DiMario (D-Dist. 36, Narragansett, North Kingstown, New Shoreham) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2024-S 2526](#)).
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- **Senate passes DiPalma bill to import cheaper prescription drugs from Canada**
The Senate approved legislation ([2024-S 2400](#)) sponsored by Senate Finance Committee Chairman Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Little Compton, Newport, Tiverton) that would establish the Wholesale Prescription Drug Importation Program to help Rhode Islanders struggling with the costs of prescription drugs by creating a program to directly import lower-cost drugs from Canada to be sold throughout Rhode Island. The bill now heads to the House, where Rep. Teresa A. Tanzi (D-Dist. 34, South Kingstown, Narragansett) has introduced the legislation ([2024-H 7444](#)).
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- **House passes Lima bill that creates custody procedures for pets in divorce cases**
The House passed legislation ([2024-H 7970](#)) sponsored by Rep. Charlene M. Lima (D-Dist. 14, Cranston, Providence) that would create custody procedures for pets during divorce or separation proceedings. Representative Lima said that in a divorce proceeding, pets are often viewed as property and used as leverage over the other

party without regard to the pet's well-being. The legislation also lays out factors to consider if joint custody of the animal between the separating parties is possible. The bill now heads to the Senate for consideration.

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▪ **Senate OKs DiMario bill to require regular needs assessments at DCYF**

The Senate voted to approve legislation ([2024-S 2705A](#)) sponsored by Sen. Alana M. DiMario (D-Dist. 36, Narragansett, North Kingstown, New Shoreham) to require the Department of Children, Youth and Families to conduct independent periodic assessments of its programs and services to ensure they are meeting the needs of children and families in Rhode Island. The bill now heads to the House, where Rep. Julie A. Casimiro (D-Dist. 31, North Kingstown, Exeter) has introduced companion legislation ([2024-H 7823](#)).

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▪ **Election integrity bill moving through chambers**

The House and the Senate each approved legislation ([2024-H 7664A](#), [2024-S 3058](#)) to establish a clear process for reporting and investigating cases of suspected signature fraud involving candidates' nomination papers. Each of the bills, sponsored by Sen. Dawn Euer (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown) and Rep. June S. Speakman (D-Dist. 68, Warren, Bristol), now goes to the other chamber for consideration.

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