

June 3, 2022

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>



- **Legislature OKs bill for mail ballot signature review, certification process**
The General Assembly approved legislation ([2022-H 7428A](#), [2022-S 2119A](#)) introduced by Rep. Evan P. Shanley (D-Dist. 24, Warwick) and Sen. Cynthia A. Coyne (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence) that would allow for the early certification of mail ballots. The bill would also establish a new and more comprehensive mail ballot voter signature verification process. The measure now moves to the governor's office.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Assembly OKs wiretap bill to help stop human trafficking**
The General Assembly approved legislation ([2022-S 2706](#), [2022-H 7700](#)) sponsored by Senate Judiciary Committee Chairwoman Cynthia A. Coyne (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence) and House Small Business Committee Chairwoman Carol Hagan McEntee (D-Dist. 33, South Kingstown, Narragansett) to allow wiretaps for suspected human trafficking investigations. The bill now goes to the governor.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **General Assembly approves bill to address child abuse in military families**
The General Assembly passed legislation ([2022-S 2105](#), [2022-H 6617](#)) introduced by Sen. Alana M. DiMario (D-Dist. 36, Narragansett, North Kingstown) and Rep. Julie Casimiro (D-Dist. 31, North Kingstown, Exeter) that would require the Department of Children, Youth and Families to determine the military status of the parents of any abused child and report the matter to the appropriate military authorities, including the Military Family Advocacy Program. The measure now moves to the governor's

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office.

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- **Senate OKs bill to require electricity from renewable energy sources by 2033**
The Senate approved legislation ([2022-S 2274A](#)) introduced by Senate President Dominick J. Ruggiero (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) to formalize and accelerate Rhode Island’s commitment to a renewable energy future. The bill would require that 100 percent of all electricity sold in Rhode Island be generated from renewable sources by 2033 – the most ambitious timeline of any state in the nation. The bill now heads to the House, where Rep. Deborah Ruggiero (D-Dist. 74, Jamestown, Middletown) has introduced similar legislation ([2022-H 7277](#)).
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **House OKs bills on school attendance, pandemic-related extended absences**
The House of Representatives approved two bills introduced by Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) that focus on school attendance. The first ([2022-H 7062](#)) would provide that in developing alternative-learning plans, consideration would be given to the unique difficulties and interruptions that many students have experienced because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It would also authorize the granting of extended absences from school that are not intended to be permanent, but are permitted because of the pandemic’s unique difficulties and interruptions. The measure now moves to the Senate, where similar legislation ([2022-S 2572](#)) has been introduced by Sen. Sandra Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket). The second ([2022-H 7167A](#)) would direct school districts experiencing high rates of student absenteeism to establish attendance support teams to address this absenteeism. The measure now moves to the Senate for consideration.
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Senate OKs bill to increase penalties for wage theft, employee misclassification**
The Senate approved legislation ([2022-S 2775](#)) sponsored by Majority Leader Michael J. McCaffrey (D-Dist. 29, Warwick) that would make wage theft with a value of more than \$1,500 a felony. Enhanced penalties would vary depending on the value of the stolen wages, with a minimum of up to three years in prison and up to \$10,000 in fines and a maximum of up to 10 years in prison and twice the value of the wages. The measure now moves to the House of Representatives, where similar legislation ([2022-H 7677](#)) has been introduced by Rep. Robert E. Craven (D-Dist. 32, North Kingstown).
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **House approves bill to clarify public shoreline access**
After months of work by a bipartisan study commission led by Rep. Terri Cortvriend (D-Dist. 72, Portsmouth, Middletown), the House unanimously approved legislation she sponsored to define the area of the shore to which the public has access as the area up to six feet landward of the recognizable high tide line. The bill ([2022-H 8055A](#)), which now goes to the Senate, is intended to settle the long-debated question of where exactly the public can go under the public shoreline access right provided by the Rhode Island Constitution.
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **House approves affordable housing bills**

The House approved two affordable housing bills sponsored by Rep. June Speakman (D-Dist. 68, Warren, Bristol) that are part of a legislative package backed by Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) to help address the state’s housing crisis. The bills, both of which now go to the Senate for consideration, streamline the approval process for affordable housing developments ([2022-H 7949A](#)) and create a more robust system for ensuring that affordable housing remains affordable and occupied by those who qualify for it ([2022-H 7650A](#)).
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **House OKs bill to study effects of hybrid and virtual learning during pandemic**

The House passed a resolution ([2022-H 7118A](#)) introduced by Rep. Julie A. Casimiro (D-Dist. 31, North Kingstown, Exeter) that creates a commission to study the effects and impacts of hybrid and virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The commission will examine the impacts that hybrid and virtual learning has had on the achievement rates of children in kindergarten through grade 12 due to the pandemic. Members of the commission would also outline steps and make recommendations to identify gaps and establish plans to address these issues.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate passes DiPalma bill to study RI Board of Education**

The Senate passed a joint resolution ([2022-S 2442A](#)) introduced by Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Little Compton, Newport, Tiverton) that would create a joint study commission to examine the governance structure of Rhode Island’s public education system. The purpose of the commission would be to study, review, and make recommendations on how to most efficiently and effectively administer the governance of the K through 16 public education system in Rhode Island. The bill now heads to the House, which approved companion legislation ([2022-H 7784A](#)) introduced by Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston).
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