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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.rilin.state.ri.us/News/>



- **Budget bill clears House Finance Committee**

The House Finance Committee approved an \$8.7 billion state budget bill that eliminates state income tax on Social Security benefits for many Rhode Islanders, does away with taxes on utilities for businesses, includes economic and jobs development initiatives and provides funding for school construction and greater tax relief for lower-income families. The plan ([2015-H 5900A](#)) includes no broad-based tax increases, fully funds the education aid formula and includes Gov. Gina Raimondo's structural changes to Medicaid, although with a smaller impact on hospitals and nursing homes. It does not include a recently proposed plan to toll large trucks to pay for highway and bridge repairs. The bill goes before the House Tuesday. [Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Pension settlement in budget, wins court approval**

The state budget approved by the House Finance Committee includes provisions for the pension lawsuit settlement agreed to by the state and the unions representing its employees. The budget bill was approved the same day that Superior Court Judge Sarah Taft-Carter ruled in favor of the settlement.

- **Minimum wage legislation headed to governor's desk**

The General Assembly approved legislation ([2015-H 5074A](#), [2015-S 0194A](#)) sponsored by Sen. Erin P. Lynch (D-Dist. 31, Warwick, Cranston) and Rep. David A. Bennett (D-Dist. 20, Warwick, Cranston) to raise the state's minimum hourly wage from \$9 to \$9.60 effective Jan. 1. [Click here to see news release.](#)

More...

- **House passes Kennedy's Electric Supplier Consumer Bill of Rights**

The House of Representatives approved a bill ([2015-H 5978Aaa](#)) introduced by Rep. Brian Patrick Kennedy (D-Dist. 38, Hopkinton, Westerly) that would impose a series of regulatory requirements upon the electrical generation and distribution industry for the protection of consumers. The bill, which now heads to the Senate, outlines various kinds of information that would have to be provided to consumers and sets procedures for the sale and solicitation of electric generation services by an electric supplier. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Bill would set midnight curfew on fireworks use**

The House Judiciary Committee approved a bill ([2015-H 5187A](#)) sponsored by Rep. Arthur Corvese (D-Dist. 55, North Providence) to ban the use of consumer fireworks between the hours of midnight and 7 a.m. and punish violators with a \$75 fine.
- **House passes Corvese bill targeting SNAP benefits misuse**

The House approved legislation ([2015-H 5018Aaa](#)) sponsored by Rep. Arthur J. Corvese (D-Dist. 55, North Providence) to ban the use of electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards for the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) at establishments that specialize in products aimed at adults, including liquor stores, gambling facilities and retailers that provide entertainment involving nudity. Sen. William A. Walaska (D-Dist. 30, Warwick), Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Newport, Little Compton, Tiverton) and Sen. Nicholas D. Kettle (R-Dist. 21, Coventry, Foster, Scituate, West Greenwich) are sponsoring similar bills ([2015-S 0312](#), [2015-S 0047](#), [2015-S 0120](#)) in the Senate. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Sen. Lombardi will not seek a vote on public safety overtime bill at this time**

Sen. Frank S. Lombardi (D-Dist. 26, Cranston) will not seek passage of the legislation he submitted providing overtime payments for public safety personnel who work long hours. The senator will seek an appropriation of funds to conduct an independent review of staffing, scheduling, and overtime in police and fire departments in Rhode Island to determine if the state could benefit from a defined workweek for public safety personnel. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **House HEW committee recommends passage of McNamara's Right to Try Act**

The House Committee on Health, Education and Welfare voted to recommend passage of the Rhode Island Terminally Ill Patient's Right to Try Act of 2015, which was introduced by Committee Chairman Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston). The bill ([2015-H 5093](#)) would allow terminally ill individuals to obtain experimental drugs that have not yet been federally approved but which may be in the final stages of FDA testing.
- **Senate passes Crowley's non-liquid alcohol ban**

The Senate passed Sen. Elizabeth A. Crowley's (D-Dist. 16, Central Falls, Pawtucket) legislation ([2015-S 0255](#)) that bans any form of alcohol other than in an ingestible liquid state. The bill is a response to a dangerous new trend in which alcohol vapors are inhaled through a variety of crude methods, such as pouring over dry ice and

inhaling the fumes or “free-basing” with an open flame. Rep. Lauren H. Carson (D-Dist. 75, Newport) sponsored companion legislation ([2015-H 5189A](#)) that has passed the House Judiciary Committee.

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

▪ **Carol Hagan McEntee to be sworn in as representative**

Representative-elect Carol Hagan McEntee will be sworn in on June 16 after winning a special election to fill the vacant District 33 seat in South Kingstown and Narragansett. A Democrat, she succeeds Donald J. Lally Jr., who resigned his seat earlier in the 2015 session. Representative-elect Hagan McEntee served as a member of the South Kingstown Town Council from 2008 until June 2015.

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