

June 26, 2015

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/>



- **General Assembly approves 2016 state budget**

The General Assembly approved and sent to the governor 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.

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

- **Legislators raise minimum wage for tipped workers**

The Assembly passed legislation ([2015-H 5364A](#), [2015-S 0291A](#)) sponsored by Sen. Gayle L. Goldin (D-Dist. 3, Providence) and Rep. Aaron Regunberg (D-Dist. 4, Providence) to increase the minimum wage for tipped workers in Rhode Island by \$1 over the next two years. Under the bill, which will now be forwarded to the governor, the minimum hourly base rate for tipped workers would rise from \$2.89 to \$3.39 on Jan. 1, 2016, and to \$3.89 on Jan. 1, 2017.

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- **Assembly approves Community-Police Relationship Act**

The Assembly approved legislation sponsored by Rep. Joseph S. Almeida (D-Dist. 12, Providence) and Sen. Harold M. Metts (D-Dist. 6, Providence) aimed at improving relations between the community and police. The Comprehensive

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Community–Police Relationship Act of 2015 ([2015-S 0669aa](#), [2015-H 5819A](#)) will require all police departments to continue to collect data on race at traffic stops and to compile annual reports indicating what action has been taken to address any racial disparities in traffic stops and searches documented in previous reports. The legislation also prohibits “consent searches” of juveniles without reasonable suspicion or probable cause of criminal activity. The bills will now be sent to the governor. [Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **Bill banning pregnancy discrimination passes General Assembly**

The Rhode Island General Assembly has passed legislation that makes it illegal for employers to discriminate based on pregnancy, childbirth or a related medical condition. The measure now moves to the governor’s office. The Senate bill ([2015-S 0276Aaa](#)), introduced by Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick) and the House version ([2015-H 5674Aaa](#)) sponsored by Rep. Shelby Maldonado (D-Dist. 56, Central Falls) amends an existing state law that prohibits employers from discriminating against job applicants. [Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **General Assembly passes legislation phasing out cesspools**

Legislation that would provide for the eventual removal of all cesspools in the state has passed the General Assembly and now moves to the governor’s office. The Senate bill ([2015-S 0369A](#)), introduced by Sen. V. Susan Sosnowski (D-Dist. 37, South Kingstown, New Shoreham) and the House version ([2015-H 5668A](#)) introduced by Rep. Teresa Tanzi (D-Dist. 34, South Kingstown, Narragansett) amend the Rhode Island Cesspool Act of 2007, including replacing individual sewage disposal systems with onsite wastewater treatment systems and would require cesspool removal or replacement upon the transfer of the property where the cesspool is located under certain circumstances. [Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **Bill giving housing priority to homeless veterans passes both houses**

The General Assembly has passed legislation that would give homeless veterans an edge when seeking public housing assistance. The Senate bill ([2015 S-0646](#)), which was introduced by Sen. Juan M. Pichardo (D-Dist. 2, Providence), along with the House version ([2015-H 5917](#)), sponsored by Rep. Jan P. Malik (D-Dist. 67, Warren, Barrington), give veterans preference for housing rental subsidy and housing retention assistance by amending the Rhode Island Housing Resource Act. [Click here to see news release.](#)

▪ **Senate, House pass bills adding PTSD to conditions treatable with marijuana**

The Senate voted to approve legislation ([2015-S 0475A](#)) introduced by Sen. Stephen R. Archambault (D-Dist. 22, Smithfield, North Providence, Johnston) that would add post traumatic stress disorder to the list of conditions that may be treated with medical marijuana. The House passed similar legislation ([2015-H 5766](#)) that was introduced by Rep. Scott A. Slater (D-Dist. 10, Providence). [Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Sen. Raptakis, Rep. Serpa murder/parole bill passes legislature**
The Rhode Island General Assembly passed legislation ([2015-S 0132A](#) / [2015-H 5158A](#)) that requires individuals convicted of murder to serve at least 50 percent of their prison sentences behind bars before being eligible for parole. The legislation was sponsored by Sen. Leonidas P. Raptakis (D-Dist. 33, Coventry, East Greenwich, West Greenwich) and Rep. Patricia A. Serpa (D-Dist 27, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick).
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Legislation naming state insect heads to governor's desk**
Legislation designating the endangered American burying beetle Rhode Island's official state insect — a bill initiated by third graders at St. Michael's Country Day School in Newport — passed the General Assembly and is now headed to the governor. Rep. Lauren Carson (D-Dist. 75, Newport) and Sen. V. Susan Sosnowski (D-Dist. 37, South Kingstown, New Shoreham) introduced the legislation ([2015-H 6093](#), [2015-S 448](#)) at the request of the students who discovered earlier this year that Rhode Island is one of only four states without a state insect. The beetle was once found in many eastern states but now exists only on Block Island and in five states west of the Mississippi River.
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- **Ruggerio, DeSimone, Providence will work to develop I-195 accord**
Senate Majority Leader Dominick J. Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence), House Majority Leader John J. DeSimone (D-Dist. 5, Providence) and the City of Providence announced that they will work together to develop a tax stabilization agreement, or TSA, for companies that locate in the I-195 Redevelopment District.
[Click here to see news release.](#)