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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.rilegislature.gov/pressrelease>



- **General Assembly convenes 2017 session**
The Rhode Island Senate and House of Representatives opened their respective chambers Tuesday, kicking off the 2017 legislative session. Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea gave the oath of office to the 113 legislators: 75 in the House, including 12 new state representatives, and 38 in the Senate, including four new state senators.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Nicholas Mattiello elected Speaker of the House**
Rep. Nicholas A. Mattiello (D-Dist. 15, Cranston) was re-elected Speaker of the House for the 2017-18 legislative session. In his inaugural remarks, Speaker Mattiello stated his intent to bolster Rhode Island's economic competitiveness. He outlined an agenda that included phasing out the state's car tax, raising the minimum wage, and continuing to increase funding for public education.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Sen. M. Teresa Paiva Weed elected President of the Senate**
On the opening day of the 2017-18 Senate session, Sen. M. Teresa Paiva Weed (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown) was once again elected to the post of Senate President by her colleagues. In her opening remarks to the chamber, President Paiva Weed highlighted her legislative priorities for the new session, which include passing several criminal justice reforms, strengthening the economy and creating jobs, and improving mental health services in Rhode Island.

More...

- **Metts elected President Pro Tem; Crowley elected Deputy President Pro Tem**
Sen. Harold M. Metts (D-Dist. 6, Providence) was elected by his colleagues to serve as its President Pro Tempore for the 2017-2018 General Assembly session. Sen. Elizabeth A. Crowley (D-Dist. 16, Central Falls, Pawtucket) was elected as the Deputy President Pro Tempore. The Senate President Pro Tempore presides over the Senate when the Senate President is unavailable. In turn, the Deputy President Pro Tempore presides over the Senate when both the Senate President and the Senate President Pro Tempore are unavailable to preside during session.
[Click here to see Metts release.](#) [Click here to see Crowley release.](#)

- **Rep. Hull to reintroduce bill eliminating double tax on leased vehicles**
Rep. Raymond A. Hull (D-Dist. 6, Providence, North Providence) plans to reintroduce legislation ([H-2016 7069](#)) he has submitted the past two years that prohibits the collection of a sales or use tax on taxes already included in a motor vehicle lease payment. Representative Hull also praised Speaker Mattiello's pledge to rectify the issue.
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Rep. Solomon introduces sales tax holiday legislation**
Rep. Joseph J. Solomon Jr. (D-Dist. 22, Warwick) introduced legislation ([2017-H 5022](#)) to establish a sales tax holiday for the weekend of Aug. 12-13, 2017. The tax holiday, designed to give local business an economic boost, means no excise or sales taxes would be collected on sales of tangible personal property.
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Rep. McNamara bill would use forfeitures to fund substance abuse education**
Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) has introduced legislation ([2017-H 5018](#)) that would use criminal forfeiture money and fines to fund substance abuse prevention programs. The bill would utilize 10 percent of funds accruing to the state from forfeitures, fines and penalties to fund a kindergarten through grade 12 substance abuse prevention program as part of the Department of Education's health curriculum.
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Sen. Felag to introduce legislation exempting retirement benefits from taxation**
Sen. Walter S. Felag Jr. (D-Dist. 10, Warren, Bristol, Tiverton) will introduce two pieces of legislation that deal with the recently passed law that exempts the first \$15,000 in retirement pension benefits from the state's income tax. The first bill will clarify the already passed tax exemption by clearly stating the various types of retirement benefits and plans that will apply to the 2017 tax year. The second bill will take the existing exemption of \$15,000 and raise the level to \$20,000.
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Rep. Nardolillo to sponsor legislation to reinstate E-Verify**
Rep. Robert A. Nardolillo (R-Dist. 28, Coventry) will propose legislation to make Rhode Island more pro-business by reversing former Gov. Lincoln Chafee's 2014 executive order on immigration, and reinstating E-Verify. The bill would require the state of Rhode Island to use E-Verify to assure any new employees it hires are legally allowed employment in the state.
[Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Speaker Mattiello, Sen. Da Ponte speak at SBA summit**

Speaker of the House Nicholas A. Mattiello (D-Dist. 15, Cranston) and Senate Finance Committee Chairman Daniel Da Ponte (D-Dist. 14, East Providence) spoke at the U.S. Small Business Administration and Center for Women & Enterprise's 10th annual Small Business Economic Summit at Bryant University. More than 240 small-business owners and advocates, along with several members of the Senate and House of Representatives, participated in the summit.

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