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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>



- **Rep. Ackerman bill would establish student loan forgiveness program**
Rep. Mia Ackerman (D-Dist. 45, Cumberland, Lincoln) has submitted legislation to establish a student loan forgiveness program targeted at helping middle-income students afford the high cost of college. Under the “Get on Your Feet” program ([2017-H 5143](#)), eligible state residents who graduate from post-secondary educational institutions and continue to live in the state will pay nothing on their student loans for their first two years out of school.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. O’Brien reintroduces bill that terminates parental rights of rapists**
Rep. William W. O’Brien (D-Dist. 54, North Providence) reintroduced legislation ([2017-H 5215](#)) that would terminate all parental rights of convicted rapists when a child is born from the assault. The legislation would apply when the parent has been convicted of sexual assault upon the birthmother and a child results from the sexual assault. After a fact finding hearing by the family court establishes the paternity of the child through DNA testing, the father’s parental rights would be terminated by order of the court.
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Edwards bill would create Joint Committee of the Repealer**
House Majority Whip John G. Edwards (D-Dist. 70, Portsmouth, Tiverton) has introduced legislation ([2017-H 5216](#)) that would create a Joint Committee of the Repealer to compile suggestions for repeal of statutes and regulations that are archaic, out of date or not business-friendly.
[Click here to see news release.](#)

More...

- **Sen. Kettle bill would exempt military pensions from income tax**
 Sen. Nicholas D. Kettle, (R-Dist. 21, Coventry, Foster, Scituate, West Greenwich), has introduced legislation ([2017-S 0042](#)) that would exempt the portion of a military pension which is included in federal adjusted gross income from the state income tax. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Sen. Raptakis introduces bill to raise minimum wage to \$10 per hour**
 Sen. Leonidas P. Raptakis (D-Dist. 33, Coventry, West Greenwich, East Greenwich) has introduced legislation ([2017-S 0078](#)) to raise the state's minimum wage to \$10 per hour starting Jan. 1, 2018. Senator Raptakis came to the number of \$10 per hour by linking the raise to certain economic data points such as the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the Northeast region. The CPI is determined by the United States Department of Labor Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Rep. Canario bill would protect grandparents' rights in abused child cases**
 Rep. Dennis M. Canario (D-Dist. 71, Portsmouth, Little Compton, Tiverton) has introduced legislation ([2017-H 5213](#)) that would prohibit the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) from placing, through the courts, an abused or neglected child with either the child's paternal or maternal grandparents without interviewing and investigating both sides of the child's family. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate Committee hears update on Twin River Tiverton project**
 The Senate Committee on Special Legislation and Veterans Affairs, chaired by Sen. Walter S. Felag (D-Dist. 10, Warren, Bristol, Tiverton) heard an update about the newly voter-approved Twin River Tiverton project this week. John Taylor, chairman of the board, and Craig Eaton, general counsel, presented the committee with details of the the progress of the new casino which is expected to open in July 2018.
- **Senate Committee hears update on RI Veterans Home**
 The Senate Committee on Special Legislation and Veterans Affairs received an update on the state's new veterans' home from Rhode Island Director of Veterans Affairs Kasim Yarn. Construction on the building is 66 percent completed and is on track for an expected opening in the fall of 2017.
- **Washington County legislators pen letter opposing rail bypass plans**
 The entire Washington County legislative delegation, comprising lawmakers in both the House and Senate, has sent a letter to the Federal Railroad Administration raising grave concerns about a proposal to build a rail bypass for the Northeast Corridor. Specifically, the legislators are troubled by the environmental impact of a rail line that would go through wetlands, aquifers, nature preserves, open space, private property and farmland.