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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>



- **Senate passes Conley bill expanding Renewable Energy Growth Program**
The State Senate has passed legislation ([2017-S 0112A](#)) introduced by Sen. William J. Conley Jr. (D-Dist. 18, East Providence, Pawtucket) that would expand the successful Renewable Energy Growth Program with an additional 400 megawatts of renewable energy over 10 years. The program allows large commercial projects as well as small renewable energy producers — such as rooftop solar — to sell their energy to National Grid at a set price over a set time (15 to 20 years). Similar legislation ([2017-H 5274](#)) has been introduced in the House by Rep. Deborah Ruggiero (D-Dist. 74, Jamestown, Middletown).
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **House OKs Bennett bill to allow students sunscreen in schools**
Students in Rhode Island schools will not be denied the right to possess and apply sunscreen under legislation sponsored by Rep. David Bennett (D-Dist. 20, Cranston, Warwick) and unanimously approved by the House. The bill ([2017-H 5176](#)) creates an exemption in school medication regulations for sunscreen, which, as a Food and Drug Administration-regulated substance, requires a prescription or doctor's note for possession at school. Sen. Joshua Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence) is sponsoring identical legislation in the Senate ([2017-S 0105](#)).
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **House approves bill requiring rear-facing car seats for tots under 2**
The House passed legislation sponsored by House Majority Leader K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) to protect small children by requiring those under age 2 or weighing less than 30 pounds to be in rear-facing car seats in

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automobiles. Senate President Dominick Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) is sponsoring identical legislation ([2017-S 0275](#)) in the Senate.

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

▪ **House Finance Committee hears Morin’s student loan forgiveness bill**

The House Finance Committee has heard legislation ([2017-H 5169](#)) introduced by Rep. Michael Morin (D-Dist. 49, Woonsocket) that would establish the ‘Get on Your Feet’ student loan forgiveness program, which would assist recent college and university graduates in the repayment of their student loans, by providing a grace period for the first two years after graduation. For those who meet the requirements, the state would pay the difference between what the federal government covers and the individual’s total loan payment.

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

▪ **Senate Policy Caucus bill will enact Affordable Care Act at state level**

The Senate Health and Human Services Committee heard a bill sponsored by the Senate Policy Caucus and Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) to protect Rhode Island consumers from changes at the federal level should Congress repeal or weaken the Affordable Care Act. Health and Human Services Chairman Joshua Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence) is the primary sponsor of the legislation ([2017-S 0831](#)). Identical legislation ([2017-H 6156](#)) has been introduced in the House by Rep. Brian Patrick Kennedy (D-Dist. 38, Hopkinton, Westerly).

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

▪ **House Minority Leader Morgan pushes for statewide dispatch system**

House Minority Leader Patricia Morgan (R-Dist. 26, Coventry, Warwick, West Warwick) has proposed legislation ([2017-H 5891](#)) that would use surcharge fees collected by telecommunications providers to create a statewide computer assisted dispatch (CAD) system. The 911 fees collected for various billed services would be deposited into a restricted receipt account instead of the general fund.

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

▪ **Ranglin-Vassell proposes end to shaming with universal school lunch**

With bipartisan support, Rep. Marcia Ranglin-Vassell (D-Dist. 5, Providence) introduced legislation to provide free lunch to all public school students. The bill ([2017-H 6150](#)) is a response to “lunch shaming,” the practice of limiting students who owe money for school lunches to a cold cheese sandwich entrée or identifying them by other means, but also aims to ensure all students are well-fed and ready to learn.

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

▪ **Rep. Lima introduces legislation to ban 'forever pets'**

Rep. Charlene M. Lima (D-Dist. 14, Cranston, Providence) has introduced legislation ([2017-H 6216](#)) to prohibit any business or individual in Rhode Island from renting, leasing, or in any other way offering a live animal for sale as a “forever pet” other than by a full outright sale. The legislation will make the renting or leasing of a “forever pet” a cruelty to animal violation punishable by a fine and/or imprisonment.

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

- **Rep. Kazarian introduces bill to keep guns out of schools**

Rep. Katherine S. Kazarian (D-Dist. 63, East Providence) has introduced legislation ([2017-H 5345](#)) that would allow only peace officers and persons approved by school authorities for the purposes of educational instruction to carry firearms or other weapons on school grounds. The legislation would apply for the property of any public or private elementary or secondary school, including school buses. Violation of the proposed law would result in imprisonment for no less than one year nor more than five years and a potential fine of no less than \$500 and no more than \$5,000. [Click here to see news release.](#)

- **Rep. Nardolillo hosts ‘Bowties Against Bullying’ event in House chamber**

Rep. Robert A. Nardolillo III (R-Dist. 28, Coventry) hosted the third annual “Bowties Against Bullying” in the House chamber. For each legislator, staffer or House page who wore a bowtie, Representative Nardolillo donated \$10 to CABINS (Community Against Bullying in Schools), a Rhode Island organization that formed when a teenager committed suicide after being bullied by classmates. The event raised \$740 for the organization. [Click here to see news release.](#)

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