

May 3, 2019

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>



- **Sen. DiPalma’s legislation regarding net neutrality rules passes Senate**
The Senate passed legislation ([2019-S 0040](#)) introduced by Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Newport, Tiverton, Little Compton) that would prohibit the state from entering into contracts with any internet service provider (ISP) who engages in business practices that were prohibited by repealed net neutrality rules. The legislation would require ISPs that wish to compete for state contracts to not block lawful content or applications, slow down access to lawful internet content, offer paid prioritization of content or applications or unreasonably interfere with users’ ability to access lawful content or applications.
- **House approves Rep. Bennett’s bill updating physician assistant law**
The House approved legislation sponsored by Rep. David A. Bennett (D-Dist. 20, Warwick, Cranston) updating state law concerning physician assistants. The bill ([2019-H 5572](#)) would specify that physician assistants work collaboratively with physicians instead of under their supervision, providing a measure of freedom that will help them see more patients and address the shortage of health care providers in the state. The bill now goes to the Senate, where Sen. Erin Lynch Prata (D-Dist. 20, Warwick, Cranston) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2019-S 0443](#)).
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate OKs Felag bill to raise limit of brewery-to-customer beer sales**
Sen. Walter S. Felag’s (D-Dist. 10, Warren, Bristol, Tiverton) legislation ([2019-S 0620](#)) that would increase the amount of beer sold directly to customers by breweries was passed by the Rhode Island Senate. The bill allows breweries to sell a full case of 24 beers. If they produce 12-ounce cans or bottles, the brewery’s limit on the

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amount of beer sold remains the same. If the brewery produces 16-ounce cans or bottles, as many of the craft breweries do, the limit increases to a full case of 24 16-ounce bottles or cans.

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▪ **Two Lawson bills on apprenticeships and contractor bonds pass Senate**

Two pieces of legislation sponsored by Sen. Valarie J. Lawson (D-Dist. 14, East Providence) were passed by the Rhode Island Senate this week. The Senate passed a resolution ([2019-S 0711](#)) respectfully requesting that the Governor's Workforce Board partner with the Department of Labor and Training to develop a report on the feasibility of expanding non-trade registered apprenticeship programs in Rhode Island. The Senate also passed legislation ([2019-S 0585](#)) that amends the statutory bonding requirements for public projects that will increase the pool of companies that can bid on state projects, which could potentially increase competition and lower costs for taxpayers.

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▪ **Committee hears Speaker Mattiello's opioids bills**

The House Committee on Health, Education and Welfare held hearings on two bills sponsored by House Speaker Nicholas A. Mattiello (D-Dist. 15, Cranston) to help address the opioids crisis. The first bill ([2019-H 5537](#)) would limit prescriptions for opiates to a seven-day supply when prescribed for the first time to adults, and every time for patients under 18. The second bill ([2019-H 5536](#)) would add law enforcement and emergency medical personnel to the Good Samaritan Overdose Prevention Act, which protects them from civil or criminal liability arising from helping a person they believe is overdosing.

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▪ **Sen. Seveney, Rep. Diaz named legislators of the year by mental health group**

The Mental Health Association of Rhode Island named Sen. James A. Seveney (D-Dist. 11, Portsmouth, Bristol, Tiverton) and Rep. Grace Diaz (D-Dist. 11, Providence) legislators of the year for their sponsorship of a 2018 law improving the mental health of Rhode Island. The law requires insurers to treat behavioral health counseling and medication maintenance visits the same as primary health care visits when determining patient cost-sharing.

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▪ **Rep. Diaz, Sen. Crowley celebrate Child Care Awareness Day at State House**

Rep. Grace Diaz (D-Dist. 11, Providence) and Sen. Elizabeth A. Crowley (D-Dist. 16, Central Falls, Pawtucket), chairwoman and vice chairwoman respectively of the Permanent Legislative Commission on Child Care, celebrated Child Care Awareness Day and Early Care and Education Advocacy Day in the State House.

This year's celebration began with a Strolling Thunder march from the Rhode Island Convention Center to the State House. The march is sponsored by Think Babies, an advocacy campaign whose mission is to ensure that all babies and toddlers have a strong start in life.

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▪ **Rep. O'Brien named chairman of Joint Lottery Committee**

Rep. William W. O'Brien (D-Dist. 54, North Providence) was unanimously elected as the chairman of the Permanent Joint Committee on State Lottery by his fellow committee members. The Joint Committee on State Lottery is responsible for legislative oversight of all lottery operations, which fall under the Department of Administration. The General Assembly created the committee following voter approval of the Separation of Powers constitutional amendment, which removed legislators from various boards and commissions.

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