

March 26, 2021

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>



- **House passes Act on Climate to commit to carbon reduction**  
The House approved the Act on Climate, which updates the state’s climate-emission reduction goals and makes them enforceable, resulting in net-zero carbon emissions from Rhode Island’s entire economy by 2050. The bill ([2021-H 5445A](#)), sponsored by Rep. Lauren H. Carson (D-Dist. 75, Newport), now goes to the Senate, which approved identical legislation ([2021-S 0078A](#)) sponsored by Senate Environment and Agriculture Chairwoman Dawn Euer (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown) last week. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **House passes two bills from Speaker Shekarchi’s housing legislation package**  
The House approved two bills from Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi’s seven-bill housing package. The first ([2021-H 5950](#)), sponsored by Speaker Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick), creates a legislative commission to study all aspects of land use, preservation, development, production, regulation, zoning, housing and the environment. The other ([2021-H 5953A](#)), sponsored by Rep. June S. Speakman (D-Dist. 68, Warren, Bristol) creates a special legislative commission to study the Rhode Island Low and Moderate Income Housing Act. [Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate backs bill requiring full coverage of colorectal cancer screening**  
The Senate approved legislation ([2021-S 0383A](#)) sponsored by Senate Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence) requiring full insurance coverage of colorectal cancer screenings. Senator Goodwin’s colleagues amended the bill to rename it “The Maryellen Goodwin Colorectal Screening Act” to honor her advocacy for cancer screening coverage. She has sponsored the act for three years — beginning

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before her own diagnosis of colorectal cancer, for which she is now being treated — and the Senate has approved it each time. The bill now goes to the House, where Rep. Mia A. Ackerman (D-Dist. 45, Cumberland, Lincoln) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2021-H 5432](#)).

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▪ **House approves McNamara bill to protect vulnerable road users**

The House of Representatives passed legislation introduced by Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) that would protect vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians and cyclists. The bill ([2021-H 5093](#)) would provide for specific fines and sanctions to operators of motor vehicles who fail to exercise due care to avoid colliding with a vulnerable road user causing injury, serious injury, or death to the vulnerable road user. The measure now moves to the Senate, where similar legislation ([2021-S 0318](#)) has been introduced by Sen. Stephen R. Archambault (D-Dist. 22, Smithfield, North Providence, Johnston).

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▪ **House OKs Amore bill to require R.I. residents on state commissions**

The House of Representatives passed legislation ([2021-H 5418](#)) introduced by Rep. Gregg Amore (D-Dist. 65, East Providence) that would require that all persons serving on boards and commissions appointed by the governor be residents of Rhode Island. The bill states that unless membership on a board or commission requires a professional license issued by the state, all members or designees serving on boards and commissions responsible for the oversight of state agencies or political subdivisions, the management or disposal of state property or assets, or the promulgation of rules and regulations authorized by the general laws shall be residents of the state.

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▪ **Senate OKs Gallo resolution seeking protections for student loan borrowers**

The Senate approved a resolution ([2021-S 0281](#)) sponsored by Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick) asking Rhode Island's Postsecondary Education Commissioner to form a work group to identify ways Rhode Island can protect student loan borrowers.

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▪ **Rep. Henries bill would create housing opportunities in urban neighborhoods**

Rep. Brianna E. Henries (D-Dist.64, East Providence) is sponsoring legislation to encourage the development of multifamily housing in urban areas to help address Rhode Island's affordable housing shortage. The Opening the Market for Housing in Urban Areas Act of 2021 ([2021-H 6093](#)) would allow the development of "middle housing" — duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, cottage clusters and townhouses — in areas zoned for single-family development in cities and towns with populations of 20,000 or more. Similar legislation ([2021-S 0657](#)) has been introduced in the Senate by Sen. Tiara Mack (D-Dist. 6, Providence).

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▪ **Marszalkowski bill allows virtual public meetings to continue past the pandemic**

Rep. Alex D. Marszalkowski (D-Dist. 52, Cumberland) has introduced legislation ([2021-H 5891](#)) that would allow virtual public meetings to continue until July 1, 2023. The legislation allows the state, municipalities, boards and commissions to continue using virtual meetings and electronic public participation by amending the Open Meetings Act in the hopes of protecting the public from the pandemic and generating greater public participation through electronic remote access to public meetings.

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- **McEntee bill expanding child sexual abuse law heard in committee**  
Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee's (D-Dist. 33, South Kingstown, Narragansett) legislation ([2021-H 5725](#)) that expands the current statute regarding civil lawsuits in child sexual abuse cases was heard by the House Judiciary Committee. The bill would provide that the term "perpetrator defendant" includes all persons or entities whose conduct contributed to sexual abuse or exploitation of a child. Similar legislation ([2021-S 0514](#)) has been introduced in the Senate by Sen. Alana DiMario (D-Dist. 36, North Kingstown, Narragansett).
  
- **200th anniversary of Greece's independence celebration held in Senate, House**  
The 200th anniversary of Greek Independence Day was celebrated this week by the Senate and the House of Representatives. Resolutions ([2021-S 0694](#), [2021-H 6166](#)) commemorating the event were introduced by Sen. Leonidas P. Raptakis (D-Dist. 33, Coventry, East Greenwich, West Greenwich) and Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston). Father Philip Zymaris of the Assumption Greek Orthodox Church of Pawtucket addressed the Senate and Father Aaron Walker of the St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church in Newport addressed the House.

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