

May 14, 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 and Senate pass bills changing unemployment to expand workforce**
The House and the Senate each passed bills changing unemployment regulations with the intent of putting Rhode Islanders back to work while still allowing them to take advantage of federal support. Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee (D-Dist. 33, South Kingstown, Narragansett) sponsored the legislation ([2021-H 6249A](#)) in the House and Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence) sponsored the bill ([2021-S 0858aa](#)) in the Senate. The legislation will help businesses recover by incentivizing workers to take additional shifts and work more hours, because they can still keep some of their unemployment benefit.
[Click here to see McEntee release.](#)
[Click here to see Goodwin release.](#)
- **House passes amended legislation strengthening IGT/Bally's agreement**
The House approved amended legislation ([2021-H 5223A](#)) sponsored by House Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) to strengthen the agreement between the state and IGT and Twin River, now Bally's Corporation. The bill now goes to the Senate, where companion legislation ([2021-S 0040](#)) is sponsored by Senate President Dominick J. Ruggiero (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence).
[Click here to see news release.](#)
- **Senate OKs bill providing flexibility in insurers' prescription requirements**
The Senate approved legislation ([2021-S 0302](#)) sponsored by Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick) to give doctors and patients some relief from rigid insurance prescription requirements known as "step therapy." Step therapy is a cost-savings tool implemented by the insurance industry that forces patients to try and

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fail on medications other than what their doctor has prescribed before their insurer will cover the cost of the original medication. The bill now goes to the House of Representatives, where Rep. Patricia A. Serpa (D-Dist. 27, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick) is sponsoring its companion ([2021-H 5704](#)).

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▪ **Sherlock Center to continue services for RI blind and visually-impaired students**

Speaker of the House K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick) and Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) announced that a resolution has been reached regarding future programming for blind and visually impaired students at the Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities, located at Rhode Island College. Speaker Shekarchi and President Ruggerio pledged that the Sherlock Center will maintain its funding for the next two years in the state budget, allowing blind and visually-impaired students to continue services with their current teachers uninterrupted.

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▪ **Senate approves bill to prevent elder financial exploitation**

The Senate approved legislation ([2021-S 0264A](#)) sponsored by Sen. Cynthia A. Coyne (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence) to require financial institutions to report suspected financial exploitation of seniors to the Office of Healthy Aging, and authorizing them to temporarily hold transactions they suspect as such. It now goes to the House, where Rep. Joseph J. Solomon Jr. (D-Dist. 22, Warwick) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2021-H 5642](#)).

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▪ **Senate passes bill recognizing child care as a valid campaign expense**

The Senate approved legislation ([2021-S 0060](#)) sponsored by Sen. Gayle L. Goldin (D-Dist. 3, Providence) to codify into law a provision allowing candidates for office to use campaign funds for child care while they are participating in campaign or officeholder activities. The legislation will now go to the House, where Rep. Justine A. Caldwell (D-Dist. 30, East Greenwich, West Greenwich) is sponsoring companion legislation ([2021-H 5989](#)).

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

▪ **House OKs legislation to develop statewide standards in consumer education**

The House of Representatives passed legislation ([2021-H 5491](#)) introduced by Deputy Majority Whip Mia A. Ackerman (D-Dist. 45, Cumberland, Lincoln) that would require the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education to develop and approve consumer education standards in public high schools. The measure now moves to the Senate, which has passed similar legislation ([2021-S 0349](#)) introduced by Sen. Sandra Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket).

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

▪ **House OKs bill naming airport ‘Rhode Island T.F. Green International Airport’**

The House of Representatives passed legislation ([2021-H 6051](#)) introduced by Speaker Pro Tempore Brian Patrick Kennedy (D-Dist. 38, Hopkinton, Westerly) that would rename the state airport in Warwick “Rhode Island T.F. Green International Airport.” The measure now moves to the Senate, which has passed similar legislation

([2021-S 0519](#)) introduced by Majority Leader Michael J. McCaffrey (D-Dist. 29, Warwick).

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▪ **Senate passes child abuse, child marriage bills**

The Senate passed legislation ([2021-S 0412](#)) introduced by Sen. Alana M. DiMario (D-Dist. 36, Narragansett, North Kingstown) that would require the Department of Children, Youth and Families to report to the Children's Advocacy Center all cases of suspected child sexual abuse. The measure now moves to the House of Representatives, where similar legislation ([2021-H 5139](#)) has been introduced by Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee (D-Dist. 33, Narragansett, South Kingstown). The Senate also passed legislation ([2021-S 0398aa](#)) introduced by Sen. John Burke (D-Dist. 9, West Warwick) that would prohibit marriage among anyone below the age of 18. Rep. Julie Casimiro (D-Dist. 31, North Kingstown, Exeter) has introduced companion legislation ([2021-H 5387](#)) in the House.

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

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

▪ **Senate OKs bill to fill vacancies in attorney general, treasurer, secretary of state**

The Senate passed a joint resolution ([2021-S 0015](#)) introduced by Senate Majority Leader Michael J. McCaffrey (D-Dist. 29, Warwick) that would ask Rhode Island voters to amend the state constitution, allowing for a special election when vacancies occur in the offices of secretary of state, attorney general and general treasurer, as long as there is more than one year remaining in the term. For situations where there is less than one year left to a term, the General Assembly would elect a replacement in grand committee. The measure now moves to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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

▪ **Senate passes bill establishing a public safety records management system**

The Senate passed legislation introduced by Senate President Dominick J. Ruggiero (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) that would establish a statewide public safety records management system. The legislation ([2021-S 0059A](#)) would replace the current system used by local law enforcement, which has become technologically obsolete. The measure now moves to the House, where similar legislation ([2021-H 5596](#)) has been introduced by Rep. Robert E. Craven (D-Dist. 32, North Kingstown).

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