

RI Legislative Update

(Some Info compiled from Legislation RI, Westerly Sun, and Providence Business News)

As mentioned in our last update a couple of weeks ago the number of bills presented this session – particularly those that could impact our industry (and most RI businesses) – have been very slow in development and of those introduced few seem to be the focus of House and Senate leadership. With that in mind I thought I would review what legislation that the RI General Assembly has been considering – with a close look of activities over the past two weeks.

Last week the House of Representatives approved legislation (2018-H 8042) introduced by Rep. Daniel P. McKiernan (D-Dist. 7, Providence) that would require that the Rhode Island Ethics Commission make all financial statements required of certain public officials available online for public inspection. The measure now heads to the Senate for consideration.

House passes Neil Fachon Right to Try Act of 2018

The House of Representatives passed the Neil Fachon Rhode Island Terminally Ill Patients Right to Try Act of 2018 (2018-H 7294) submitted by Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston). The bill would allow terminally ill patients to obtain experimental drugs that have not yet been federally approved but which may be in the final stages of FDA testing. The measure now moves to the Senate, where similar legislation (2018-S 2401) has been introduced by Sen. Erin Lynch Prata (D-Dist. 31, Warwick, Cranston).

Senate approves bill to overhaul drug awareness program

The Rhode Island Senate passed legislation (2018-S 2025Aaa) introduced by Sen. James A. Seveney (D-Dist. 11, Portsmouth, Bristol, Tiverton) that would change the way drug awareness programs are approved and funded. The bill now moves to the House of Representatives, where similar legislation (2018-H 7221) has been introduced by House Majority Whip John G. Edwards (D-Dist. 70, Tiverton, Portsmouth).

The House of Representatives passed legislation (2018-H 7569) introduced by Rep. Mia Ackerman (D-Dist. 45, Cumberland, Lincoln) that would require hospitals to offer

influenza vaccinations to their inpatients who are 65 and over unless the person has a condition that would not allow such vaccination or if the vaccine is in short supply. The measure now moves to the Senate, where similar legislation (2018-S 2226) has been introduced by Sen. Erin Lynch Prata (D-Dist. 31, Warwick, Cranston).

House OKs bill to ban ads for unhealthy foods in schools

The House of Representatives passed legislation (2018-H 7419A) submitted by Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) that would prohibit the advertising of unhealthy food and beverage products in schools, particularly those that may not be sold on the school campus during the school day, since they do not meet the minimum nutrition standards. The measure now moves to the Senate, which has passed similar legislation (2018-S 2350A) introduced by Sen. V. Susan Sosnowski (D-Dist. 37, South Kingstown, New Shoreham).

Senate passes bill creating elder abuse, financial exploitation task force

The Senate approved legislation (2018-S 2868) sponsored by Sen. Cynthia A. Coyne (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence) to create a special legislative task force to study abuse and financial exploitation of elderly Rhode Islanders. The bill now goes to the House, where Rep. Patricia A. Serpa (D-Dist. 27, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick) has introduced companion legislation (2018-H 8031).

Miller introduces updated pot bill

Sen. Joshua Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence) introduced legislation (2018-S 2895) that draws upon the experiences of states where marijuana has been legalized to create a system to tax and regulate marijuana in Rhode Island. The bill would create a tax structure mirroring that of Massachusetts, where recreational marijuana sales will become legal in July.

House approves bill overhauling Energy Facility Siting Board

The House approved legislation (2018-H 8120 A) sponsored by Rep. Cale P. Keable (D-Dist. 47, Burrillville, Gloucester) to overhaul the Energy Facilities Siting Board and to provide a more comprehensive process for reviewing power plant proposals. The bill now goes to the Senate, where Sen. Paul W. Fogarty (D-Dist. 23, Gloucester, Burrillville, North Smithfield) said he will introduce companion legislation.

Mattiello, Ruggiero applaud decision on sports betting

Speaker of the House Nicholas A. Mattiello (D-Dist. 15, Cranston) and Senate President Dominick J. Ruggiero (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) applauded the United States Supreme Court's decision this week to allow states to offer legalized sports betting. The governor has included a budget article accounting for legalized sports betting in her FY 2019 budget proposal. The Senate Finance Committee heard testimony on the proposed budget item as well as a sports betting bill introduced by President Ruggiero.