**The 2024 Session Begins**

Welcome to the 2024 Subscription to Advocacy in Action. The legislature began its session last week. Bills are currently being filed and we expect hearings to slowly begin in the upcoming weeks.

Key dates for 2024 include the following:

Last day for Senate public bill introduction – February 15, 2024

Last day for House public bill introduction – February 15, 2024

Winter Recess – February 19-23, 2024

Spring Recess – April 15-19, 2024

**New Laws Now in Effect**

We want to remind you that a few new laws went into effect as of January 1, 2024.

Wage Theft/Independent Contractor - 2023 Public Law Chapters 244 and 245 – create felony penalties if an employer knowingly and willfully: (1) fails to pay employees on a regular pay day and the amount owed is over $1500, (2) fails to pay any employee wages owed at the time of termination of employment and the amount is over $1500, or (3) fails to pay wages owed to a deceased employee to the appropriate person/entity within 30 days of death, and the amounts owed are greater than $1500. The law adopts the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) definition of independent contractor by directing the Department of Labor and Training (DLT) to review all complaints of misclassification using those factors. The law requires DLT to undergo an investigation of complaints with the assistance of the Underground Economy Task Force. The findings, along with a recommendation, is given to the Director of DLT who then passes it along to the Attorney General with the Director’s recommendations. A business that misclassifies employees under the new test, is liable for civil penalties in the amount of $1500 - $3,000 for each misclassified employee for the first offense and up to $5000 for each misclassified employee for any subsequent offense. The money is divided equally between the DLT and the individual harmed. Any “construction industry” related entity that knowingly and willfully violates the new standard is guilty of a misdemeanor if the value is less than $1500, or a felony if the value is greater than $1500 and it is a second offense. If the construction related business or individual misclassifies employees in a manner that is not knowing and willful, the penalty reverts back to a civil penalty of $1,500-$3,000 per misclassified employee. ***Lastly, any “party” that is not an employer but intentionally contracts with an employer that intends to misclassify employees is subject to the same penalties as the employer.*** Public Laws were signed by the Governor. http://webserver.rilegislature.gov/BillText/BillText23/SenateText23/S1079Aaa.pdf

http://webserver.rilegislature.gov/BillText/BillText23/HouseText23/H5902Aaa.pdf

Independent Contractor Registration – 2023 Public Law Chapters 242 and 243 require independent contractors to file electronically with the Department of Labor and Training (DLT) on an annual basis, “regardless of how many forms are filed.” This would seem to suggest an annual filing for each client. There is no fee tied to the filing requirement. DLT is required to submit the list to the Division of Taxation each April 1st. The new law becomes effective January 1, 2024. http://webserver.rilegislature.gov/BillText/BillText23/HouseText23/H5710A.pdf

http://webserver.rilegislature.gov/BillText/BillText23/SenateText23/S0427B.pdf

Electric Vehicle Parking Lot Infrastructure – 2023 Public Law Chapters 268 requires large employers – defined as those with 100 employees located in a single complex – to install circuitry and other necessary equipment to support Level 2 or DC fast chargers in new parking lots as well as lots undergoing a 50% expansion renovation. The mandate also applies to big box stores, grocery stores, housing developments with more than twenty units, malls, hotels, and certain municipal buildings. The law was amended during the final hours of session to apply only to new projects awarded subsequent to January 1, 2024, that receive any form of public funding. Public funding is defined as “funds derived from federal, state or municipal sources; in-kind remuneration from any federal, state or municipal source; gifts or grants from any federal, state or municipal source; revenue sharing or other federal, state or municipal payments of any nature, intergovernmental transfers; tax stabilization agreements, revenues resulting from the sale of state or municipal bonds; or by the sale or lease of any property owned by the federal government, the State of Rhode Island, and/or any municipality of the state.” http://webserver.rilegislature.gov/BillText/BillText23/SenateText23/S0988aa.pdf

**CHAMBER MEMBER ACTION REQUEST - Preparations for 2024 Session**

Throughout the legislative session, **the Chamber may be calling on you, asking for your assistance conveying our message on legislation to legislators.** Please go to https://vote.sos.ri.gov and click on “Find Your Elected Officials.” Enter your zip code and address. Find your “Representative District” legislator and your “Senate District” legislator (if you live in Rhode Island). Email your name and the legislators name to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. The Chamber will be compiling a database for future grassroots efforts. If you also know a legislator who lives in another district, please send that information to the Chamber as well and we will include it in the database.

**Thank you for your help!**

The following new bills have been filed:

House Bill No. [7023](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText24/HouseText24/H7023.pdf)  Bennett, Morales, Speakman, Boylan, Kislak, Cortvriend, Diaz, Lima, Ajello, Carson**,**AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY FOR PACKAGING (Reduces equitable relationships between packaging producers and local governments and communities by establishing the Package Reduction and Recycling Program.) <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText24/HouseText24/H7023.pdf>

House Bill No. [7042](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText24/HouseText24/H7042.pdf) Potter, Cruz, Morales, Kislak, Donovan**,**AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- THE RHODE ISLAND HEALTH CARE REFORM ACT OF 2004 -- HEALTH INSURANCE OVERSIGHT (Regulates price increases for prescription drugs.) <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText24/HouseText24/H7042.pdf>

House Bill No. [7045](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText24/HouseText24/H7045.pdf) Fellela, Fenton-Fung, Baginski, Serpa, Shallcross Smith, Messier**,**AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- AUTOMATED EXTERNAL DEFIBRILLATORS REQUIRED AT PUBLIC PLACES (Requires golfing facilities to have an automated external defibrillator on the premises.) <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText24/HouseText24/H7045.pdf>

House Bill No. [7054](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText24/HouseText24/H7054.pdf) Morales, Potter, Batista, McNamara, Felix, Tanzi, Cruz, Craven, Stewart, Bennett**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- PAYMENT OF WAGES (Provides employees with civil administrative remedies against contractors, subcontractors involved in the contract with joint/severable liability imposed on contractors or subcontractors. Effective 9/1/2024.) <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText24/HouseText24/H7054.pdf>

House Bill No. [7058](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText24/HouseText24/H7058.pdf) Azzinaro, Shallcross Smith, Vella-Wilkinson, Fenton-Fung, Kennedy, Solomon, Phillips, J. Lombardi, Hull, Abney**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- POSTING OF VETERANS' BENEFITS AND SERVICES (Requires employers in the state with more than 50 employees to display a poster containing basic information on veterans' benefits and services be created and distributed by the DLT in consultation with the office of veterans services.) <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText24/HouseText24/H7058.pdf>

House Bill No. [7064](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText24/HouseText24/H7064.pdf) McEntee, Cortvriend, Carson, Diaz, Phillips, Costantino, Shallcross Smith, Vella-Wilkinson, Craven, Caldwell**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- OUTDOOR DINING ACT (Establishes standards governing the municipal regulation of outdoor dining at food service establishments.) <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText24/HouseText24/H7064.pdf>

House Bill No. [7065](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText24/HouseText24/H7065.pdf) Bennett, DeSimone, Finkelman, McEntee, McNamara, Fogarty, Serpa, Boylan, Cortvriend, Edwards**,**AN ACT RELATING TO BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS -- HOTELS (Requires online posting of hotel rules and expand the authority of the innkeeper to eject a person for being verbally abusive or physically threatening to an employee or hotel guest.) <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText24/HouseText24/H7065.pdf>