**An Update from the State House**

After completing their break, the legislature is back in action, although the pace is a little bit slower at this point – mirroring the old cliché “the calm before the storm.” The House and Senate Finance committees have begun to discuss the budget in the hopes of completing a spending plan by mid-June (the end of June may more likely); and the remainder of the committees are starting to pass bills for consideration by the full body. Still – a few new bills have been introduced and hearings continue to proceed.

**H.8117**, a new bill listed below, will be heard by the **House Corporations Committee Tuesday**. Under current law, The Division of Taxation is required to send a report to the Department of Motor Vehicles listing the names, social security numbers and addresses of those individuals who fail to pay taxes to the State of Rhode Island as required. There is no administrative or appellate review. The DMV will then refuse to register a vehicle or transfer one until the taxes are paid. H.8117 requires the Tax Administrator to send a notice to everyone on the list in order to provide them with the opportunity to pay the amount due or to contest the finding.

**S.2226** (Sen. Lynch Prata, McCaffrey, Miller, Metts, and Nesselbush) will be heard in the **Senate Health and Human Services Committee Tuesday**. This bill simply requires all hospitals to offer flu vaccinations, during the flu season, to patients (inpatients and outpatients) who are 65 years of age or older. The 2017-2018 season was particularly active. Sadly, between October 1st and April 4th, Rhode Island lost 42 people to flu-related death – 38 were age 65+. Hospitals reported that 822 inpatients age 65+ tested positive for the flu. 605 outpatients age 65+ tested positive for the flu. In addition, the Rhode Island Department of Health has reported that Memorial Hospital ER in Pawtucket was treating about 80 people each day with Influenza like symptoms, at full capacity, thus sending patients with Influenza like symptoms to other Providence area hospitals. Proponents hope that more opportunities to obtain the flu shot will result in less deaths or hospitalizations.

**S.2461** (Sen. Metts, and Quezada) adds the same restrictions concerning second-hand exposure to marijuana and vaping. In a nutshell, if a person can’t legally smoke tobacco in a specific location (i.e. in a commercial building, by the door) then if S.2461 passes, a person could not smoke marijuana or use a vapor system in that location. S.2461 will be heard by the **Senate Judiciary Committee Tuesday**.

The opponents of the Burrillville Power Plant have another opportunity to stop the siting of the plant. **H.8120** (Rep. Keable, Newberry, Price, Handy, Ruggiero) was filed last Friday and will receive a hearing in the **House Committee on Environment and Energy Thursday**. H.8120 increases the number of people on the Energy Facilities Siting Board from 3 to 9. Under current law, the Director of the PUC, DEM and the Director of Administration for Planning are the members of the board. This bill would add the Department of Health, Attorney General, 4 members of the public (2 of which must be residents of the proposed host community of a facility, 1 appointed by the Attorney General with specific qualifications, and 1 who is a member of the Rhode Island Bar Association with specific qualifications). If H.8120 were to pass it would be very difficult to site any energy facility in the state.

**H.7905** (Rep. Craven) will be heard in the **House Labor Committee Thursday**. H.7905 allows for employers, in workers' compensation actions, to shift the legal burden to employees to prove they were not intoxicated at the time of injury or death, after a showing that the employee had a positive test for intoxicating substances. Passage would mark a small victory for the business community.

The following bills were filed last week:

House Bill No. [8109](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/HouseText18/H8109.pdf)

**BY**  Marszalkowski, Morin, Ruggiero, Marshall, Edwards

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- MANUFACTURING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT--TAX INCENTIVES (Establishes the "refundable investment tax credit act" to provide for a refundable investment tax credit for certain investments in the construction of facilities, acquisition of tangible property, and the training of employees in the state.)

House Bill No. [8117](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/HouseText18/H8117.pdf)

**BY**  Costantino, Lima, Marshall, Bennett, Winfield

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO MOTOR AND OTHER VEHICLES -- REGISTRATION OF VEHICLES (Requires tax administrator to send written notice to persons failing to file tax returns/pay taxes informing them they will be prevented from renewing operator license/vehicle registration and procedures to contest determination.)

House Bill No. [8120](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/HouseText18/H8120.pdf)

**BY**  Keable, Newberry, Price, Handy, Ruggiero

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT - ENERGY FACILITY SITING ACT (Makes changes to the membership of the energy facilities siting board by increasing the size of the board from three (3) to nine (9) members, and also imposes additional requirements on applicants for energy facilities. Effective 1/1/2019.)

House Bill No. [8122](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/HouseText18/H8122.pdf)

**BY**  Abney, Marshall, Ruggiero

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO LICENSES GENERALLY (Simplifies the process of doing business in Rhode Island by eliminating unnecessary licensing requirements of various business entities.)