**Second Alert -- June 14 Deadline Approaching!!!**

This year’s elections are extremely important to the business community. In many cases, the only contested races will take place in the **Primary election September 12, 2018**. In order to vote in a party’s primary election, you must either be a member of that party or unaffiliated (independent) and be registered to vote in the district where you live.

If you would like to have more choices on who to vote for in the Primary Election, it is recommended that you register as “unaffiliated” so that you can choose which primary to vote in depending who is running in the Primary. **The deadline for disaffiliating is June 14, 2018**.

To register to vote, check your affiliation, or to change to “unaffiliated,” go to <https://vote.sos.ri.gov/> and have your driver’s license in hand.

Also, as stated previously in UTD, anyone wishing to run for office must file a Declaration of Candidacy Form with the Local Board of Canvassers in the City or Town in which you reside. Forms can be filed June 24th, 25th or 26th. Last week, Senator Daniel DaPonte (East Providence) announced he will not seek re-election.

**An Update from the State House**

**Last Week At the State House**

The **Senate Committee on Environment and Energy** discussed **S.2747** (Senators Euer, Coyne, Miller, Sosnowski and Calkin). S.2747 creates the Rhode Island Global Warming Solutions Act, which establishes legally enforceable emission reductions in the state. To accomplish these goals, the bill requires the Office of Energy Resources, the Department of Transportation and the State Building Commission to promulgate rules necessary to achieve the emission reduction goals or face a lawsuit in Superior Court. The bill mandates a 5% requirement for electric vehicles sales by 2025, 40% electric vehicles by 2035, and 95% by 2050. It also mandates that all existing buildings – commercial and residential would have to be heated solely by electricity by 2050. Ten percent of buildings heated by oil or propane would have to be switched to electric heat by 2025. No new building with a shovel in the ground on or after January 1, 2035 could be heated with oil or propane. By 2050, all RI buildings must be converted to electric heat.

The Conservation Law Foundation testified that S.2747 was modeled after a Massachusetts bill and that the economy of MA has not suffered from its passage. However, the MA bill does not include the electric car or the electric heat mandate; and the MA bill does not reach its first emissions reduction requirement until 2020, so no economic activity can be related to the passage of the MA Act – good or bad.

**This Week At the State House**

The Special Legislative Commission to Study Unlawful Sexual Harassment in the Workplace finished its work last week by filing seven bills aimed at curtailing harassment (two additional bills may be filed later this week).

**H.8275** (Reps. Vella-Wilkinson, Giarrusso, Serpa, McEntee and Lombardi) requires DCYF and the department of education to identify or develop a program of age appropriate sexual abuse and sexual awareness education to be used in schools.

**H.8276** (Reps. Tanzi, Ruggiero, Diaz, Hearn and Amore) extends the timeframe for an individual to bring an allegation of an unfair employment practice to the RI Commission Against Discrimination. The proposed Statute of Limitations would change from one year to two years after an incident has occurred.

**H.8277** (Reps Tanzi, Ajello, Walsh, Casimiro and Donovan) requires employers with 50 employees or more to conduct mandatory anti sexual harassment training within three months of a new employee’s hiring, or within three months of an employee’s promotion to a managerial position. All employees must go through a refresher training course every two years. The Department of Administration is required to provide training materials – free of charge – to any business that requests such information. Any business that receives $50,000 or more in state funds or contracts from the state must provide proof that the required training has been completed. Finally, H.8277 encourages companies to complete an annual “climate” survey including sexual harassment issues and equal opportunity questions.

**H.8278** (Reps. Tanzi, Kazarian, Ruggiero, Walsh and Regunberg) forbids an employer to require an employee to execute a nondisclosure agreement or a non-disparagement agreement regarding alleged violations of civil rights or criminal conduct. These agreements go beyond sexual harassment and could include a wide variety of issues. Employers could no longer include such confidentiality agreements in any settlements.

**H.8279** (Reps. Tanzi, Ajello, Walsh, Casimiro and Messier) expands the definition of employee under the Fair Employment Practices Act: “includes any individual under the direction and control of an employer under any appointment or contract of hire or apprenticeship, express or implied, oral or written.” It specifically eliminates the exemption for individuals in domestic service – housekeepers, nannies, etc; and includes volunteers and unpaid interns. The Fair Employment Practices Act covers much more than sexual harassment issues. The Act addresses age discrimination and accommodations for disabled employees among other categories.

**H.8280** (Reps. McEntee, Tanzi, Craven, Knight and Vella-Wilkinson) suspends the statute of limitations for alleged violations of discrimination, sexual harassment or civil rights brought to the RI Human Rights Commission and resets the clock to one year once the claim is filed.

**H.8281** (Reps. Shanley, Tanzi, McEntee, Regunberg and Vella-Wilkinson) creates a reporting requirement for state agencies and departments for violations of the fair employment practices chapter and the Equal Opportunity and Affirmative chapter. Any employer found to have committed an unfair employment practice (refusal to hire based on race, color, gender, sexual orientation, etc. or doesn't accommodate a disability) would be listed in an annual report to the Governor, the Speaker of the House, and the Senate President.  It is likely that report would be considered a public document.  The report would also include a list of agencies that have been accused - not found in violation - of failing to meet their affirmative action plan.

**Budget Watch**

The House and Senate, along with the Governor are actively meeting to work out a spending plan for FY2019. While there is a small chance the House Finance Committee will vote out a budget this week, next week seems more likely. Once voted out of Committee, the budget must sit on the House floor for seven days before the full House can vote on the document.

**Sugary Drinks**

The **Senate Finance Committee** will hear testimony **Thursday at the Rise** on **S.2196** (Senators Nesselbush, Crowley, Paolino, Jabour and Miller) which proposes a tax on sugary beverages. The tax would be paid by wholesalers; however, if the wholesaler fails to pay the tax, the retailer would become responsible for payment. Tier 1: Beverages with less than five grams (5g) of sugar per twelve fluid ounces (12 fl. oz.) will not be taxed. Tier 2: Beverages with more than five grams (5g) but less than twenty grams (20g) of sugar per twelve fluid ounces (12 fl. oz.) will be taxed at a rate of one cent ($0.01) per ounce. Tier 3: Beverages with twenty grams (20g) of sugar or more per twelve fluid ounces (12 fl. oz.) will be taxed at a rate of two cents ($0.02) per ounce. Syrups and powders which, together with fluids, create a sugary beverage will be taxed as well.

The following bills were filed last week:

House Bill No. [8253](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/HouseText18/H8253.pdf)

**BY**  Williams, Diaz, Slater, Maldonado, Tobon

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO PUBLIC PROPERTY AND WORKS - MINORITY BUSINESS ENTERPRISE (Provides that any minority business enterprise that is certified under the Federal Small Business Act shall be deemed certified by the department of administration as a minority business enterprise.)

House Bill No. [8254](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/HouseText18/H8254.pdf)

**BY**  McKiernan, Almeida, Perez, Winfield, Fogarty

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO INSURANCE -- ACCIDENT AND SICKNESS INSURANCE POLICIES--STEP THERAPY PROTOCOL (Requires health insurers, nonprofit hospital service corporations, nonprofit medical service corporations and health maintenance organizations that issue policies that provide coverage for prescription drugs and use step therapy protocols.)

House Bill No. [8258](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/HouseText18/H8258.pdf)

**BY**  Lancia

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION - BUSINESS CORPORATION AND PERSONAL INCOME TAX (Limit to 7 yrs the period within which bus. corp tax/personal income tax may be assessed for taxpayers failing to file returns on date return was due to be filed/10 yrs within which collection actions can begin from date balance assessed with 4 exceptions)

House Bill No. [8264](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/HouseText18/H8264.pdf)

**BY**  Shanley, Tanzi, McEntee, Vella-Wilkinson, Giarrusso

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS - FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES (Enhances reporting for state agencies required for violations of the fair employment practices chapter and the equal opportunity and affirmative action chapter.)

Senate Bill No. [2934](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/SenateText18/S2934.pdf)

**BY**  Miller

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- HEALTH CARE--HEALTH INSURANCE (Establishes the Rhode Island reinsurance program and restricted receipt account, from federal funding, administered by the director of the Rhode Island health benefits exchange, to mitigate the impact of high-risk individuals on health insurance rates.)

Senate Bill No. [2941](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/SenateText18/S2941.pdf)

(Lieutenant Governor)

**BY**  Conley, Nesselbush, Crowley

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CARRIERS (Reserves 5% of energy efficiency funds for low-income residents for assistance to residents who seek financial assistance with electric bills but do not meet eligibility guidelines for other financial assistance programs.)

Senate Bill No. [2950](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/SenateText18/S2950.pdf)

**BY**  Ciccone, Miller, Lombardi, Nesselbush, Fogarty

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- RHODE ISLAND PARENTAL AND FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE ACT (Allows employee granted unpaid family/parental leave to substitute any accrued vacation/sick/ other appropriate leave for any part of the unpaid leave.)

Senate Bill No. [2953](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/SenateText18/S2953.pdf)

**BY**  Conley, Nesselbush, Crowley

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- HOSPITAL CLOSURE TRANSITION ACT (Creates the "Hospital Closure Transition Act which would facilitate the acquisition of a closed hospital's assets by an existing hospital by exempting the acquisition from the hospital conversions and health care facilities licensing acts.)

Senate Bill No. [2954](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/SenateText18/S2954.pdf)

**BY**  Conley, Nesselbush, Crowley

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- HEALTH AND SAFETY--ALTERNATIVE PAYMENT INCENTIVE FOR CERTAIN ELIGIBLE HOSPITALS (Establishes a formula to create a transitional alternative payment method incentive to be used in calculating reimbursement rates that must be paid by health insurance carriers to eligible Rhode Island hospitals.)