**This Week At the State House**

With the prediction of a potential storm, bringing with it likely power outages, the State House closed last Tuesday. Two of the House hearings – House Corporations and House Committee on State Government and Elections moved their meetings to Friday, St Patrick’s Day. Those bills were heard and held for further study which is the normal process. The Senate Commerce Committee hearing was rescheduled for Thursday of this week.

The Revenue and Caseload Estimating Conference released its meeting dates and agendas, giving us a glimpse into potential timing for the budget debate to heat up. All of the meeting are livestreamed. If you ever wondered how the budget is developed, these meetings are worth watching.

Monday, April 24, 2023 – Testimony

9:00 AM Cash Assistance Caseload

1:00 PM Medical Assistance Caseload

Monday, May 1, 2023 – Economic Overview and Testimony

9:00 AM US and RI Economic Forecasts

10:30 AM Lottery Receipts

2:00 PM Caseload Follow up

Thursday, May 4, 2023 – Testimony

1:00 PM Tax Collections and Accruals

Friday, May 5, 2023 - Caseload Estimating Conference and Revenue Testimony

9:00 AM Caseload Estimating Conference

Monday, May 8, 2023 – Follow up Testimony (if necessary)\*

2:00 PM Tax Collections

May 10, 2023 – Revenue Estimating Conference

9:00 AM Revenue Estimating Conference

**Tuesday, March 21st**

The House Corporations Committee is meeting at the Rise (approximately 4:30) to consider legislation to allow undocumented individuals to qualify for Rhode Island professional or occupational licenses, provided they meet the other standards necessary to obtain the licenses. The hearing on H.5534, An Act Relating to Business and Professions – Professional or Occupational License will be held in Room 101. Testimony can be submitted to HouseCorporations@rilegislature.gov

The House Committee on Health & Human Services has an agenda full of proposals to add new health insurance coverage mandates. The hearing is scheduled for the Rise in the House Lounge. Prior to starting the hearing, the committee will take a vote on H.5348, An Act Relating to Health and Safety – Restroom Access Act. The House has passed this bill in previous years, but the Senate did not take action on it. Any retail establishments, with three or more employees working at the same time, would be required to give an individual, with a medical condition, access to a private restroom if the retail establish does not have a public restroom. If passed, the law would take effect January 1, 2024.

The following bills are also on the agenda for hearing:

H.5175, An Act Relating to Insurance – Accessible Residence Modifications requires health insurance plans to provide coverage for accessible residence modifications when determined to be medically necessary, but only after a physician makes a determination that absent the accessible modifications, the patient would have to move into a long-term care residential facility.

H.5176, An Act Relating to Insurance adds epinephrine injectors and cartridges to health insurance coverage requirements. Insurers would not be permitted to charge a co-pay or a deductible.

H.5281, An Act Relating to Insurance caps the amount a person must pay for insulin or glucose monitoring supplies to $25 for a thirty-day supply or $25 for equipment meant to last longer than thirty days.

H.5283, An Act Relating to Insurance – Mammograms and Pap Smears requires insurance coverage for additional tests deemed necessary by a physician for proper screening.

H.5350, An Act Relating to Insurance, bars insurers from charging more than $150 for a thirty-day supply of specialty prescription drugs that are used for complex, long-term conditions or rare medical conditions.

H.5351, An Act Relating to Insurance, requires insurers to cover the cost of infertility drugs and in vitro fertilization.

H.5554, An Act Relating to Insurance mandates insurers to charge no more than $25 for a thirty days supply of asthma inhalers.

Anyone wishing to submit testimony can email it to HouseHealthandHumanServices@rilegislature.gov

**Thursday, March 23rd**

The Senate Commerce Committee is meeting at the Rise (approximately 4:30 pm) in Room 313. The self-check-out process is on the schedule once again. S.472, An Act Relating to Commercial Law – Grocery Stores limits the number of customer self-checkout stations to six (two less than the House legislative version); and requires certain stores to maintain one manual check-out station for every self-checkout station in use. Unlike the House version, S.472 does not include a payment requirement to customers that utilize the self-check-out station. S.472 could bring under its umbrella grocery stores, pharmacies, and certain retail stores that offer a wide array of goods.

S.171, An Act Relating to Commercial Law – Unfair Sales Practices, addresses subscriptions that automatically renew. Businesses offering such subscriptions would be required to provide clear and conspicuous notice about the renewal process and how to cancel the renewal. The specifics of the notice requirements can be found at: <http://webserver.rilegislature.gov/BillText/BillText23/SenateText23/S0171.pdf>

S.176, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Consumer Credit History Employment Protection Act, prohibits employers from (1) seeking or using credit reports in making hiring decisions concerning prospective employees, (2) asking questions about the applicant's financial past during interviews or (3) including credit history questions in their job applications. The bill also establishes a civil penalty of up to $10,000 plus attorney fees and court costs for a violation of the act.

Testimony may be submitted to slegislation@rilegislature.gov

The House Environment Committee will meet at the Rise in the House Lounge. Packaging is the topic of the day. H.5090, An Act Relating to Food and Drugs – Disposable Food Service Containers, prohibits food establishments from using polystyrene foam food containers, or plastic beverage stirrers. Agricultural fairs, farmers’ markets and food pantries are exempt. Violations of the act are subject to a $100 fine. The bill is effective upon passage.

H.5502, An Act Relating to Health and Safety – Beverage Container Deposit Recycling Act of 2023, establishes a $.10 deposit on cans and bottles sold in Rhode Island. Retail establishments that sell the products must install redemption machines unless the retailer devotes less than 2,000 sq.ft. of display space to such products. Retailers with 10,000 – 30,000 sq.ft. of display space must install two redemption machines (reverse vending machines). If a retailer devotes 30,000 – 60,000 sq. ft. of display space to such products, it must install three redemption machines. Retailers with more than 60,000 sq. ft. must install four machines. Exemptions do exist for retailers that sell containers with less than 20 oz where all packages contain less than six containers; where less than 5% of its floor space is used to display these products; and any retailer that has an alternative technology approved by the Department of Health. Redemption retailers are entitled to a handling fee of $.035 of the per container returned to the facility.

If the bottle bill is of concern to you, this is a hearing you will want to attend if possible. If you can not be present, testimony can be emailed to: HouseEnvironmentandNaturalResources@rilegislature.gov

The following new bills have been filed:

House Bill No. [6147](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText23/HouseText23/H6147.pdf) Perez, Costantino, Cardillo, Fellela, Baginski, J. Lombardi, Hull, Phillips, Noret, Azzinaro**,**AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS REGULATION (Establishes the Motor Vehicle Liability Insurance Exchange.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText23/HouseText23/H6147.pdf>

House Bill No. [6148](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText23/HouseText23/H6148.pdf) Alzate, Kazarian, Potter, Cruz, Diaz, Kislak, Fogarty, J. Lombardi, Batista, Felix**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- PERSONAL INCOME TAX (Creates an added 3% tax on taxable income in excess of $417,500 (in 2011 dollars)/ $557,000 (in 2023 dollars). Restricts the revenue generated by the tax to child care, education and infrastructure repairs and maintenance.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText23/HouseText23/H6148.pdf>

House Bill No. [6151](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText23/HouseText23/H6151.pdf) Diaz, Slater, Edwards, Kennedy, Perez, Alzate, Kislak**,**AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- REFUSE DISPOSAL (Provides time limitations on the collection or hauling of from large trash receptacles (dumpsters) refuse within one hundred feet (100') of a dwelling unit between the hours of ten o'clock (10:00) pm and eight o'clock (8:00) am.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText23/HouseText23/H6151.pdf>

House Bill No. [6171](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText23/HouseText23/H6171.pdf) Ajello, Kislak, Speakman, Alzate, Potter, Cruz**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- PERSONAL INCOME TAX -- CAPITAL GAINS (Amends the capital gains tax rates and holding period from 5 years to 1 year. Imposes a non-owner occupied tax on homes assessed at more than $1,000,000.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText23/HouseText23/H6171.pdf>

Senate Bill No. [683](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText23/SenateText23/S0683.pdf) DiMario**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- ZONING ORDINANCES (Extends the moratorium on penalties related to COVID-19 modifications to food business or food service establishments to February 15, 2024.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText23/SenateText23/S0683.pdf>