**Major Changes at the State House**

It is a new year and it brings with it a potential new Governor, a new Speaker of the House Joe Shekarchi and many new members of the Rhode Island House and Senate.

The Senate will meet Tuesday, January 12th at 4:00 pm. Members of the Senate will begin filing new bills. Committee assignments are also expected to be announced this week. The House is set meet January 19th, although the House is accepting bill filings from members now.

### The first bill filed in the House for 2021 was H.5000. The bill requires the House and the Senate members to vote, in what is called the Grand Committee, to fill any vacancy in the Lieutenant Governor office. This comes after Governor Raimondo agreed to accept President-elect Biden’s nomination as Secretary of Commerce. The Rhode Island Constitution states, “ *The governor shall, by and with the advice and consent of the senate, appoint all officers of the state whose appointment is not herein otherwise provided for and all members of any board, commission or other state or quasi-public entity which exercises executive power under the laws of this state; but the general assembly may by law vest the appointment of such inferior officers, as they deem proper, in the governor, or within their respective departments in the other general officers, the judiciary or in the heads of  departments*.” The Constitution does not specifically state how a Lt. Governor vacancy is to be filled, so the Governor’s appointment provision would seem to govern.

The timing of the confirmation process in Washington will be key to Rhode Island. Last month, the legislature passed a budget that included the deferral of the Governor’s FY2022 budget submission requirement to March instead of January. If Raimondo leaves prior to the March deadline, then the budget should be delivered by current Lt. Governor Dan McKee. The Chamber will also be watching to see which members of Governor Raimondo’s staff are offered positions in Washington, and what changes will come with a McKee governorship.

**CHAMBER MEMBER ACTION REQUEST - Preparations for 2021 Session**

As stated in the last edition of UTD, the 2021 legislative session will be very different. The House plans to meet at the Veterans’ Auditorium; and the Senate plans to meet at RI Community College. Hearings will likely be at the State House, but testimony will have to be submitted in writing, or orally through virtual media. Meetings with legislators will likely also take place virtually.

**The Chamber may be calling upon you more than ever before.** **We are asking for your assistance as we prepare for this new session.** Please go to <https://vote.sos.ri.gov> and click on “Find Your Elected Officials.” Enter your name, birthdate and zip code. Find your State Representative and State Senator for your home address (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!**