**An Update from the State House**

**House Committee Passes Rules**

The House Committee on Rules passed proposed rules for the 2019-20 legislative years. Historically, few people outside the state house paid much attention to the rules, but this year was different. Over two hours of testimony was presented at a hearing. The bill that will go before the House floor this week contains two significant changes: 1. A required 24- hour public posting of committee substitute bills prior to committee votes; and 2. The creation of a Committee on Conduct.

The 24 hour posting requirement will not apply to the budget, which makes sense. The budget is different from every other bill in that is must sit on the House floor for 7 days prior to a full house vote - giving plenty of time for legislators and the public to review the Substitute bill passed by the House Finance Committee. The proposed rule also states that a Chair of a Committee may waive the 24 hour posting requirement if the change in the bill is technical, grammatical or not substantive in nature.

The Committee on Conduct would be responsible for investigating any claims of sexual harassment that takes place during the business of the House.

Committee memberships can be assigned once the rules are passed by the House.

**Governor’s Task Force on Plastics**

Governor Raimondo established a Task Force to Study the reduction of the use of plastics. Four subcommittees were established, including one on legislative activity. Three meetings have taken places with members of both the environmental community and the business community. At the last meeting, it appeared that a recommendation might come forward that would ban the use of plastic bags and allow businesses to charge a fee to customers that wish to use a paper bag. The discussion included the idea of allowing a business to keep the fee collected in order to defray some of the increased cost of using paper over plastic bags. The business community strongly advocated for preemption language to ensure that the rules are consistent across the state. It is as yet unclear what a final bill will look like and whether a consensus will be reached between the members of the subcommittee. A final meeting will be held January 22.

Another subcommittee of the Task Force is asking businesses and organizations for examples of programs or policies used to minimize or eliminate the use of single use plastics. A survey has been developed and can be found at <http://bit.ly/DEMplastics-survey> . As the subcommittee stated, “We have heard anecdotally and through first hand stories that many RI businesses have taken action on their own on this issue. We’d like to collect and share these stories, looking for ways to provide guidance and examples to others as part of our work group effort.”

**Governor’s State of the State Address**

Governor Gina Raimondo will be delivering her State of the State Address 7:00 p.m Tuesday, January 15th.

The following bills were filed last week:

House Bill No. [5045](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/HouseText19/H5045.pdf) McNamara, Millea, Ackerman, Jackson, Nardone**,**AN ACT RELATING TO PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CARRIERS - E-911 UNIFORM EMERGENCY TELEPHONE SYSTEM DIVISION (Mandates that the E-911 uniform emergency telephone system division develop and commence operation of a text-to-911 emergency system on January 1, 2020.)

House Bill No. [5048](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/HouseText19/H5048.pdf) Solomon, Jackson, McNamara, O'Brien, Vella-Wilkinson**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- SALES AND USE TAXES -- LIABILITY AND COMPUTATION (Creates a sales tax holiday for the days of August 10, 2019 and August 11, 2019.)

House Resolution No. [5049](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/HouseText19/H5049.pdf)  Carson**,**JOINT RESOLUTION MAKING AN APPROPRIATION OF $12,000 TO THE RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (This resolution would authorize the appropriation of the sum of $12,000 to the Department of Transportation for a flower bulb planting machine.)

House Bill No. [5080](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/HouseText19/H5080.pdf) Lombardi, Hull**,**AN ACT RELATING TO MOTOR AND OTHER VEHICLES -- MOTOR VEHICLES REPARATION ACT (Penalizes driving any motor vehicle that is required to be registered in this or any other state without insurance and without proof of insurance.)

House Bill No. [5093](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/HouseText19/H5093.pdf)  Lombardi, Hull, Quattrocchi, Nardone**,**AN ACT RELATING TO PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CARRIERS - REGULATORY POWERS OF ADMINISTRATION (Provides that any rate increase with respect to electric distribution companies would be no greater than the increase in the Consumer Price Index or five and one-half percent (5.5%), whichever is greater.)

House Bill No. [5097](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/HouseText19/H5097.pdf) Bennett, Lima, Williams, Blazejewski, Barros, AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- MINIMUM WAGES (Raises the existing minimum wage of ten dollars and fifty cents ($10.50) to eleven dollars and fifty cents ($11.50) on January 1, 2020, and then increase to twelve dollars and fifty cents ($12.50) on January 1, 2021.)

House Bill No. [5098](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/HouseText19/H5098.pdf) McNamara, Corvese, Jackson, McLaughlin, Fellela**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- SALES AND USE TAXES -- LIABILITY AND COMPUTATION (Exempts self-employed sole practicing investigators operating independently from any partnership, corporation, limited liability company or association from the sale tax imposed on services.)

House Bill No. [5099](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/HouseText19/H5099.pdf) Phillips, Solomon, Morin, McNamara, Johnston**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- SALES AND USE TAXES -- ENFORCEMENT AND COLLECTION (Eliminates the ten dollar ($10.00) fee requirement for the sales tax permit.)

House Bill No. [5116](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/HouseText19/H5116.pdf) Ackerman, Shekarchi, Edwards, McNamara, Blazejewski**,**AN ACT RELATING TO COMMERCIAL LAW - GENERAL REGULATORY PROVISIONS - DECEPTIVE TRADE PRACTICES (Requires retail establishments to accept cash in payment for goods and services.)