**Last Week At The State House**

Last week the **Senate Labor Committee** replaced **S.2092** (the **workplace bullying bill)** with an amended version that further expanded actions of employees for which an employer could be held liable. The amended version included acts such as: pestering, ignoring to the point of isolation, harming another’s emotional tranquility, and overbearing supervision. The Chamber pointed out that this bill is actually more troublesome than the original bill. S.2092 SubA was held for further study. Chairman Ciccone asked all parties to provide written comments to aid the Committee in its deliberation. **S.2147**, was amended to call for a one time raise of $1 per hour in the **minimum wage** starting October 1, 2020. The wage would go to $11.50 per hour. S.2147 passed the Committee on a 4-2 vote. It will be sent to the full Senate for consideration.

**This Week At the State House**

The **House Finance Committee** will meet on **Tuesday At the Rise** (around 4:30pm) in Room 35 to receive a briefing from the House Fiscal Staff on the **Governor’s budget**. The meeting will be televised on the local access channel. No public testimony will be accepted at this meeting.

The **House Environment and Natural Resources Committee** will meet on **Thursday At the Rise** to discuss a number of packaging bills and to accept public testimony. **H.7163** bans the use of plastic straws unless specifically requested by the customers and does not allow businesses to supply a dispenser on counters. **H.7164** bans the use of polystyrene containers. **H.7306** bans the use of plastic bags.

**Governor FY2021 Budget**

**Article 3 – Relating to Government Reform and Reorganization**

This Article starts out addressing the licensing of home inspectors. The passage of a licensing test was required up to July, 2019. Article 3 moves the test requirement date to December 31 2019. It also provides an alternative avenue for licensing of two years in the practice of conducting home inspections and 150 home inspections completed prior to December 31, 2019. Under current law, the inspections had to be complete prior to July 1, 2013. This may be a clean-up section to address those who failed to achieve the hours or inspection requirements by the July 2019 date.

The Article has similar language for well-drilling contractors. Current law calls for the implementation of a test requirement starting January 1, 2018. This Article changes the written testing date to July 1, 2020.

Licensing for roofing contractors would become a two-year license instead of a one-year license and would allow them to spread the ten continuing roofing education requirements over two years. The Article eliminates the need to obtain a $100,000 bond for each single project undertaken but would increase the insurance certificate amount from $1.5 million to $2 million. Lastly, the Article extends the testing grandfather clause (no test required) if the roofer was registered and in good standing by July 1, 2015 (current law says July 1, 2003).

Article 3 changes the way payments made by individuals convicted of a crime are distributed. Current law calls for restitution to the victim first, then court cost, fees and fines. This proposal calls for the court costs and expenses related to prosecution to be paid first, then restitution, then court fines and fees. The State has the right to sell seized property that was obtained illegally if that property would otherwise be destroyed and the property is not harmful to the public. Ten percent (10%) of the funds raised through the sale of the property currently goes to the Department of Health. Article 3 proposed to divert that 10% to the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH) for substance abuse prevention and treatment programs.

Commercial Drivers’ License (CDL) skills tests would be transferred from CCRI to DMV with the fee set at $100 per test.

Last year’s budget established a pilot program for the collection of debts owed to the State. This budget Article requires all agencies and quasi-public agencies to participate in the debt collection program by October 1, 2020. It gives the Department of Revenue the ability to negotiate settlements. If less than 50% of the debt is collected, the new collection unit keeps 15%.

Article 3 also addresses municipal debts owed to state agencies. Under current law, municipalities have 180 days to pay bills of state agencies and quasi-public corporations. The budget Article changes the timeframe to 90 days and then allows the state to withhold sales tax revenue or public service corporation taxes due to the municipality if the debt is not paid within the 90 day period.

The last portion of Article 3 places the constitutional question of a line item veto before the voters in Rhode Island. A line item veto would allow the Governor to veto specific items in the budget, and allow the reminder to pass into law. It would also allow the Governor to reduce the sum of a specific item. The General Assembly could then choose to take votes to override the veto or restore funding levels with a 2/3 majority vote of both the House and Senate.

**Article 4 – Relating to Debt Management Act Joint Resolutions**

Article 4 calls for the following:

* $54.8 million for information technology investments. This would be funded through two certificates of participation. This type of financing allows investors to purchase shares of the lease revenues of a program rather than a bond being secured by those revenues.
* $17 million for a new Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System for case management.
* $61.85 million for closing the Adolph Meyer Building at Eleanor Slater Hospital and renovating the Regan Building at the Hospital to accommodate the needs of individuals. $27.85 million would come from the RI Capital Plan Fund, $22 million from previous Certificates of Participation and a new issuance of a $12 million Certificate of Participation
* $35 million for a consolidated modern southern barracks for the RI state police
* $70 million for renovation of the Henderson Bridge and other facilities within the transportation system. This would be done through revenue bonds with two cents of the existing gas tax used as collateral for the bond.

The following bills were filed last week:

House Bill No. [7333](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7333.pdf)  Edwards, Canario, Williams, Bennett, Shekarchi**,**AN ACT RELATING TO BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS -- ELECTRICIANS (Allows 288 hours of trade school training to qualify for the journeyperson "B" electrical exam. Increases the period of indentured apprenticeship with the department of labor and training and a licensed electrician master to 4 years.)

House Bill No. [7339](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7339.pdf) Edwards, Newberry, Canario, Vella-Wilkinson, Kennedy**,**AN ACT RELATING TO INSURANCE -- ACCIDENT AND SICKNESS INSURANCE POLICIES (Requires that a participant or beneficiary incur no greater out-of-pocket costs for emergency services than they would have incurred with an in-network provider other than in-network cost sharing.)

House Bill No. [7344](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7344.pdf)  Place, Quattrocchi, Nardone, Chippendale, Roberts**,**AN ACT RELATING TO ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES -- MANUFACTURING AND WHOLESALE LICENSES (Increases the amount of malt beverages that a manufacturer can sell for offsite consumption from twenty-four 12 oz. And Twenty-four 16 oz. bottles or cans to Fifty-five 12 oz. and forty-one 16 oz. bottles and cans respectively.)

House Bill No. [7362](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7362.pdf) Ruggiero, Bennett, Kennedy, Handy, Blazejewski**,**AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY - BIODIESEL HEATING OIL ACT OF 2013 (This act would require ever increasing requirements of biobased product in No. 2 distillate heating oil. By July 1, 2023, ten percent (B10 - 9.5 - 10.5%) of No. 2 distillate heating oil would be biobased product. This would increase on a set schedule until until July 1, 2030 when fifty percent (B50 - 49.5 - 50.5%) would be biodiesel and/or renewable hydrocarbon diesel product in No. 2 heating oil.)

House Bill No. [7363](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7363.pdf)  Jacquard, Cassar**,**AN ACT RELATING TO INSURANCE -- INSURER RECEIVERSHIP MODEL ACT (Establishes a process for insurers who wish to utilize receivership rather than the other processes of liquidation or rehabilitation.)

House Bill No. [7367](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7367.pdf) McNamara, Ruggiero, Bennett, Jackson**,**AN ACT RELATING TO INSURANCE-ACCESSIBLE RESIDENCE MODIFICATIONS (Allows health insurance plans to provide coverage for accessible residence modifications determined to be medically necessary.)

House Bill No. [7372](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7372.pdf)  Edwards, Diaz, Canario, Blazejewski, Shekarchi**,**AN ACT RELATING TO PUBLIC PROPERTY AND WORKS -- LABOR AND PAYMENT OF DEBTS (Amends the definition of public works so that it would include any public works projects performed for any city or town or quasi-municipal entity and the state and any quasi-state entity.)

House Bill No. [7384](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7384.pdf)  Edwards, Canario**,**AN ACT RELATING TO HOLIDAYS AND DAYS OF SPECIAL OBSERVANCE (Expands the definition of "employee" to add any individual employed in a food service establishment, which would include a caterer licensed by the department of health and division of taxation, and a food truck.)