**This Week at the State House**

On **Tuesday, February 8th**, the **Senate Finance Committee** is hearing testimony on **Article 7** of the Governor’s FY2023 budget. As reported in last week’s UTD, this Article expands the purpose of the electricity energy renewable fee fund to include clean transportation, clean heating and energy storage initiatives. The article allocates $6 million of the fund to the Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (EC4) for climate-related initiatives. Article 7 also establishes an Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Program within the Office of Energy Resources and the Department of Transportation. It alludes to the use of $22.9 million from the federal Infrastructure and Investment Jobs Act. To date, the state is still waiting for the federal government to release a guidance document to confirm how federal dollars can be used by states and local governments. This guidance may not be forthcoming until late March to early May.

All public testimony for this hearing will be virtual. Written testimony can be submitted by emailing it to jplume@rilegislature.gov . You can also provide verbal testimony. To do so go to <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=LBHmn1akN0aJ3A8oTO_8ZrrkHo3ATJRAp4ByeeV8cWRUNzY2SE1ZOVFaOU1ZOEY0SkFWMEREWkpZUy4u>

and fill out the form by Monday 4:00 p.m.

On **Wednesday, February 9th**, the **House Corporations Committee** will take testimony on two bills that may be of interest to Chamber members.

H.7016, An Act Relating to Insurance – Covid-19 Pandemic Insurance Recovery, allows businesses (with less than 100 full-time employees) that had an insurance policy in place for business interruption as of March 9, 2020, to recover from their insurance companies for a Covid-19 business impact. The bill can be viewed at <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7016.pdf>

H. Resolution 7156, creates a 5 member commission to study to the manner in which health insurance, disability insurance, unemployment insurance, retirement plans and other traditional employer provided benefits are accorded to Uber and LYFT drivers, self-employed individuals, and other individuals engaged in providing services to the public. The resolution can be viewed at <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7156.pdf>

Written testimony can be submitted to HouseCorporations@rilegislature.gov until 1:30 p.m on Wednesday. Please indicate your name, bill number, and position (for/against/neutral) at the top of the message. To testify virtually, complete the form found at <https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=LBHmn1akN0aJ3A8oTO_8ZnMUMrI1W6lGqP5le-GGa29UNVgwQTZGUjQ4Q043MU1BTzRCVUVVNlAwUS4u>

by 4:00 p.m. Tuesday, February 8th. To testify in person, go to House Lounge at the State House just prior to the 4:30 p.m. start time.

**What’s in the Governor’s Budget**

**Article 2 – State Funds**. This Article establishes the “Hospital Conversion Monitoring Account” to fund monitoring activities associated with hospital conversions. It also increases the fee on telecommunication bills to allow for an addition $20,000 to go to the Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing for emergency and public communication access programs. The Article creates two restricted receipt accounts within the Department of Health and Human Services to handle the ARP funds for home and community-based services; and creates an account for the recent Opioid Settlement dollars that will be coming to the state.

**Article 3 – Government Reform**. This Article begins by eliminating the current $1 fee for duplicate caterer licenses. It gives municipalities the ability to tax, regulate or outright prohibit establishments with three or more billiard tables within the municipality. Under current law, municipalities have the same jurisdiction over bowling alleys. Article 3 repeals the requirement for municipalities to inspect and stamp hide and leather goods. The Article provides an administrative penalty to be assessed against any constable that fails to comply with state law. That penalty is $1000 per violation. And finally, the Article allows the paint stewardship program organization to maintain a reserve fund up to 50% of the total cost to run the program during the previous year, subject to the approval of the Department of Environmental Management.

**Article 4 – Debt Management.** This very short Article provides $13 million to the University of RI for a facilities service upgrade project and $15.45 million to the University for utility infrastructure upgrades (steam, water sanitary and electric support).

Article 5 – Capital Development. Article 5 outlines bond referendum questions to go before the voters on November 7, 2022. The three following items are included in the Governor’s proposal:

1. $62 million for Higher Education Facilities
	1. $50 million for the University of RI to repair and construct facilities for their marine discipline program
	2. $12 million for the four campuses of the Community College of RI to be used to modernize and renovate facilities to include energy efficiency programs, replacement of outdated technology and equipment
2. $250 million for RI School Buildings
	1. $200 million for direct funding of school construction
	2. $50 million to upgrade lighting, heating and ventilation systems in schools
3. $38 million for a Green Bond
	1. $16 million for “Municipal Resiliency” matching grants to address vulnerable coastal habitats, rivers and stream floodplains
	2. $5 million for a small business energy loan program. These loans would be zero interest and below market rate interest loans for clean energy projects
	3. $3 million for Narragansett Bay and Watershed Restoration projects such as storm water management, commercial, industrial and agriculture pollution abatement, riparian buffer and watershed ecosystem restoration.
	4. $3 million for Forest Restoration
	5. $4 million for Brownsfield Remediation and Economic Development matching grants to public, private or non-profit entities
	6. $3 million for State Land Acquisition
	7. $2 million for Local Recreation Development Matching Grant Program to assist local public recreational facility development

The following new bills have been filed:

House Bill No. [7231](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7231.pdf) Place, Roberts**,**AN ACT RELATING TO BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS -- FREEDOM TO TRAVEL AND WORK ACT (Establishes an occupational regulatory framework by authorizing the issuance of occupational licenses and government certifications by recognition, for qualified worker applicants from other states.) <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7231.pdf>

House Bill No. [7250](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7250.pdf) Kazarian, Alzate, Kislak, Amore**,**AN ACT RELATING TO ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES -- MANUFACTURING AND WHOLESALE LICENSES (Allows manufacturer-wineries to sell up to three (3) drinks of wine for on-site consumption or three (3) bottles of wine for off-site consumption or three (3) bottles of wine for off-site consumption.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7250.pdf>

House Bill No. [7277](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7277.pdf) Ruggiero, Bennett, Handy, Potter, Hull, Diaz, Kazarian, Speakman, Carson, Donovan**,**AN ACT RELATING TO PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CARRIERS-RENEWABLE ENERGY (Increases the percentage of retail electricity sales from renewable energy sources.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7277.pdf>

House Bill No. [7278](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7278.pdf) Cortvriend, Ruggiero, Bennett, Kislak, Edwards, Carson, Speakman, Knight, Fogarty, Potter**,**AN ACT RELATING TO PUBLIC PROPERTY AND WORKS -- THE GREEN BUILDINGS ACT (Expands definition of public buildings under Green Building Act to include buildings in any subdivision of state, and include private major facility projects; mandates public reports for all such projects.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7278.pdf>

House Bill No. [7279](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7279.pdf) Bennett, Cortvriend, Carson, Fogarty, McEntee, Speakman, Phillips, Ruggiero, Casimiro, Williams**,**AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY FOR PACKAGING (Creates the producer responsibility program requiring producers to make necessary changes to product design(s) to reduce packaging consumption and waste and assess fees based on the packaging.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7279.pdf>

House Bill No. [7298](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7298.pdf) Noret, Casimiro, Solomon, Kazarian**,**AN ACT RELATING TO INSURANCE -- ACCIDENT AND SICKNESS INSURANCE POLICIES (Requires that all COVID-19 testing, inclusive of rapid antigen testing and/or PCR testing are covered by insurance regardless of whether such testing is ordered by a doctor.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7298.pdf>

House Bill No. [7337](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7337.pdf) McEntee, Cortvriend, Caldwell, Slater, Carson, Phillips**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION - BUSINESS CORPORATION TAX (Suspends interest and penalty payments due from a taxpayer with less than one hundred (100) employees as a result of an audit conducted during a COVID emergency declaration and continuing until one year after the emergency declaration is lifted.) <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7337.pdf>

House Bill No. [7348](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7348.pdf) Felix, Cassar, Morales, Kazarian, Kislak, Potter, Alzate, McNamara, Casimiro, Williams**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- MINIMUM WAGES (Commencing 1/1/23, gradually increases the minimum wage for employees receiving gratuities from the current ($3.89) to ($14.95) by 1/1/2027 and on 1/1/2028 the minimum wage shall be no less than the minimum wage established by the minimum wage law.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7348.pdf>

House Bill No. [7362](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7362.pdf) Quattrocchi, Roberts, Nardone, Filippi, Price**,**AN ACT RELATING TO HOLIDAYS AND DAYS OF SPECIAL OBSERVANCE WORK ON HOLIDAYS AND SUNDAYS - GENERAL ELECTION DAY (Adds general election days to the list of holidays, in order to allow registered voters to cast their votes.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7362.pdf>

Senate Bill No. [2153](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2153.pdf) Gallo**,**AN ACT RELATING TO ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES -- MANUFACTURING AND WHOLESALE LICENSES -- RETAIL LICENSES (Repeals 3/1/22 sunset provision allowing Class B/brew pub licensees to sell wine/beer/mixed drinks with food takeout orders only.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2153.pdf>