**Last Week At The State House**

**Minimum Wage Activity**

Last week the Senate passed a minimum wage hike (**S.2147 SubA**) on the Senate floor 30-6. The SubA calls for an increase to $11.50 per hour starting October 1, 2020. This is more palatable than the proposal to raise the wage to $15 per hour. The implementation date is still problematic. The Chamber continues to advocate for a January 1 implementation date of any increase in the minimum wage. The House Labor Committee took testimony last week on **H.7157** which calls for a wage increase to $15 by 2024. The Sponsor – Rep. Bennett – testified that he would be willing to amend his bill to mirror the Senate version.

**This Week At the State House**

This week promises to be a very busy week. This Thursday is the deadline for filing bills without going through extra hoops. Also, the week of February 17th is the first recess for the General Assembly.

Today, the **House Labor Committee** is expected to pass a **minimum wage** bill identical to the bill passed by the Senate. This would call for a $1 per hour increase effective October 1, 2020.

The **Senate Finance Committee** will take testimony today in room 211 at around 4:30 pm on the **Governor’s FY2020 supplemental budget** proposal to scoop, from the current year budget, $5 million from the Resource Recovery Fund, $1 million from the Oil Spill Prevention Administration and Response Fund, $1 million from the Underground Storage Tank fund, and $12.8 million from the Municipal Road and Bridge Revolving Loan Fund. The scoops appear to be more about next year’s fiscal budget than closing a deficit for the current year. According to the House Fiscal Staff report, all of the Governor’s proposed changes to the current fiscal year budget – including the scoops – would leave the State with a $24.4 million surplus which could then be used for programs next year.

On **Wednesday**, the **House Finance Committee** will hear testimony in room 35 at around 4:30 pm on a 27-page budget Article that addresses tobacco and vaping issues. The Article raises the legal age to purchase tobacco to 21 which is already federal law following President Trump’s signing of a bill December 19, 2019. The Article raises the tax on a pack of cigarettes and additional $.35 (to $4.60 per pack) and gives municipalities the authority to regulate the sale of tobacco within their jurisdiction – giving rise to many different rules. The Article bans the sale of flavored vape products (other than tobacco) in the State of Rhode Island and restricts the nicotine content in tobacco flavored vaping products. The nicotine content is lower than the content in the current market products – effectively banning the products for adults. This Article has been called a response to the health outbreak from vaping. However, studies so far have shown that the vaping illnesses were linked to the use of black market vaping products – most laced with TCH (a marijuana component). The FDA is undertaking studies on specific products. Starting May, 2020, the FDA is expected to begin releasing rulings on products that can be sold on the market. Should Article 21 pass without amendment, products permitted to be sold under the FDA ruling would not be permitted to be sold in Rhode Island.

On **Thursday**, the **House Environment Committee** will take testimony on **H.7362** which would increase the **bio requirement in heating fuel**. Rhode Island was the first state in the country with a state-wide requirement (5%) that was implemented. New York has a 5% requirement for a portion of the state. Massachusetts suspended its requirement opting instead for a financial incentive to those that use a bio component. H.7362 requires increasing requirements of biobased product. The percentage requirement would increase to 10% July 1, 2023, and would continue increasing until July 1, 2030, when the percentage would reach fifty percent (50%). At this time, biofuel is more expensive to purchase than non-biofuel. The other question is the availability of the quantity of the bio component. Proponents of the bill – the oil heat industry – included a waiver provision in the language should the Governor determine product is not available or too costly, and they have testified that the addition of bio saves money on cleaning of heating systems.

**Governor FY2021 Budget**

**Article 5 – Relating to Capital Development Program**

Article 5 is the “bond question” Article. If passed, the following questions would go before the voters in November:

* $117.3 million for capital improvements to higher education facilities - $57.3 to URI for a Fine Arts Center, $38 million to RI College Clarke Science Building renovation, $12 million to CCRI to renovate and modernize academic and student support areas, and $10 million to URI for a Center for Ocean Innovation *(This issue will be heard in the House Finance Committee Thursday, February 13th At the Rise – approximately 4:30 in Room 35)*
* $64 million for Beach, Clean Water and Green Bond - $35 million for state beaches, parks and campground improvements; $4 million to rehabilitate local recreational facilities; $3 million for the purchase of forest conservation easements; $15 million for wastewater collection and treatment upgrades and storm water projects; and $7 million for vulnerable coastal habitats and restoring floodplains
* $87.5 million Housing and Infrastructure Bond - $25 million to increase availability of affordable housing, $20 million for a new Pier Five at Davisville in Quonset to accommodate offshore wind project needs, $21.5 million to prepare sites to be ready for industrial uses, $15 million for physical improvements to early childhood care facilities, $5 million for a matching grant program to cultural entities such as Trinity Repertory Company ($2.5 million), RI Philharmonic ($1.5 million) and other RI State Council on the Arts projects ($1 million) and $1 million to municipalities for historic sites, museums and cultural art centers.

The following bills were filed last week:

House Bill No. [7397](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7397.pdf) Jackson, Shekarchi, Noret, Serodio, Ackerman**,**AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY - LICENSING OF SWIMMING POOLS (Removes the requirement to have a person trained in first aid in close proximity to operate a swimming pool without a lifeguard.)

House Bill No. [7399](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7399.pdf) Blazejewski, Abney, Bennett, Carson, Ruggiero**,**AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT - RESILIENT RHODE ISLAND ACT OF 2014 - CLIMATE CHANGE COORDINATING COUNCIL (Establishes a statewide greenhouse gas emission reduction mandate.)

House Bill No. [7414](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7414.pdf) Craven, Caldwell, McEntee**,**AN ACT RELATING TO COMMERCIAL LAW -- GENERAL REGULATORY PROVISIONS (Prohibits delivery service from using merchant's likeness/trademark or intellectual property on its website or delivery vehicles without written merchant consent. Requires delivery service to register to do business in Rhode Island.)

House Bill No. [7435](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7435.pdf) Speakman, Knight, Donovan, Cassar**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION - PROPERTY SUBJECT TO TAXATION (Permits manufacturing or commercial concerns to apply to commerce corporation for exemption or stabilization of taxes when moving to another municipality if could reasonably and efficiently relocate outside state and that relocation would be advantageous.)

House Bill No. [7436](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7436.pdf) Kislak, Barros, Shanley, Vella-Wilkinson, Williams**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION - PERSONAL INCOME TAX (Adds 3 new income tax brackets for purposes of Rhode Island income taxation.)

Senate Bill No. [2171](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/SenateText20/S2171.pdf) Quezada**,**AN ACT RELATING TO COMMERCIAL LAW - GENERAL REGULATORY PROVISIONS (Requires a person or persons who transact business under a trade name to register with a municipality, provide more extensive information when filing and to notify the municipality when the trade name is changed or discontinued.)

Senate Bill No. [2204](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/SenateText20/S2204.pdf) Pearson, Cano, Valverde, Satchell**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION - STAY INVESTED IN RI WAVEMAKER FELLOWSHIP (Repeals the provisions of the Stay Invested in RI Wavemaker Fellowship, and establish the Stay Invested in RI Tax Credit to provide eligible taxpayers with a tax credit for educational loan repayment expenses.)

Senate Bill No. [2230](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/SenateText20/S2230.pdf)  Crowley, Quezada, Nesselbush, Metts, Euer**,**AN ACT RELATING TO INSURANCE -- INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR MENTAL ILLNESS AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE (Requires insurance coverage for at least ninety (90) days of residential or inpatient services for mental health and/or substance-use disorders for American Society of Addiction Medicine levels of care 3.1 and 3.3.)

Senate Bill No. [2236](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/SenateText20/S2236.pdf) Felag, Lombardo, Ciccone, Conley, Gallo**,**AN ACT RELATING TO INSURANCE-ACCESSIBLE RESIDENCE MODIFICATIONS (Allows health insurance plans to provide coverage for accessible residence modifications determined to be medically necessary.)

Senate Bill No. [2287](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/SenateText20/S2287.pdf) Quezada, Crowley, Metts, Bell, Euer**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- WRONGFUL DISCHARGE FROM EMPLOYMENT (Ends Rhode Island's "employment-at-will" legal doctrine, and would provide job protection for employees that satisfactorily perform their duties. The act would also provide specific remedies for wrongful discharge.)

Senate Bill No. [2295](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/SenateText20/S2295.pdf) Goldin, Lynch Prata, Goodwin, McCaffrey, Murray**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES ACT (Changes the definition of employee and employer for purposes of the fair employment practices act, while expanding personal liability for violations.)

Senate Bill No. [2296](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/SenateText20/S2296.pdf) Goldin, Ruggerio, Goodwin, Cano, Lawson**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES (Comprehensively addresses wage discrimination by expanding employee protections and the scope of the remedies available to employees who have experienced wage discrimination.)

Senate Bill No. [2297](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/SenateText20/S2297.pdf) Raptakis, Ciccone, Lombardi, Paolino, Lombardo**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- MINIMUM WAGES (Increases the hourly minimum wage to $11.10 on January 1, 2021, and commencing January 1, 2022, the hourly wage would increase in accordance with the Consumer Price Index for the Northeast Region for the four (4) previous fiscal years.)

Senate Bill No. [2301](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/SenateText20/S2301.pdf) Ciccone, Lombardi, Goodwin, Felag, Bell**,**AN ACT RELATING TO HOLIDAYS AND DAYS OF SPECIAL OBSERVANCE -- WORK ON HOLIDAYS AND SUNDAYS (Requires an individual employer to meet certain criteria in order to qualify for class exemption from the increased pay requirement for work on holidays and Sundays.)

Senate Bill No. [2304](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/SenateText20/S2304.pdf)  Lombardi, Lombardo, McCaffrey, Lynch Prata, Ciccone**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES (Amends the fair employment practices act by clearly establishing that employees of a defendant employer may be individually liable for unfair employment practices.)

Senate Bill No. [2305](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/SenateText20/S2305.pdf) Lombardi, Lombardo, McCaffrey, Lynch Prata, Ciccone**,**AN ACT RELATING TO COMMERCIAL LAW -- GENERAL REGULATORY PROVISIONS (Prohibits delivery service from using merchant's likeness/trademark or intellectual property on its website or delivery vehicles without written merchant consent. Requires delivery service to register to do business in Rhode Island.)

Senate Bill No. [2308](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/SenateText20/S2308.pdf) Quezada, Crowley, Metts, Bell**,**AN ACT RELATING TO HOLIDAYS AND DAYS OF SPECIAL OBSERVANCE -- HOLIDAY AND SUNDAY WORK (Removes health care and maintenance workers from the definition of employees not entitled to overtime pay, for purposes of overtime pay on Sundays and holidays, enabling them to collect overtime pay.)