**This Week at the State House**

The General Assembly is on February break, also called “Winter Recess.” No hearings are scheduled for this week. However, legislators and staff are busy drafting and submitting bills, as the deadline for introductions of bills was extended to February 23, 2021. We can expect hundreds of bills to be released in the coming weeks. The RI House of Representatives Task Force for COVID-19 Vaccine will be receiving a briefing on Wednesday, February 17th at 4:00 pm from Dr. Alexander-Scott. The meeting will be live streamed on Capitol TV at <http://www.rilegislature.gov/CapTV/Pages/default.aspx>

**Last Week at the State House**

**Senate Passes Minimum Wage Bill**

The Senate passed (30-6) S.1aa (as amended), An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Minimum Wages. Rhode Island’s current minimum wage, $11.50 per hour, went into effect October 1, 2020. S.1aa proposes to increase the minimum wage to $12.25 on January 1, 2022, $13.00 on January 1, 2023, $14.00 on January 1, 2024 and $15.00 on January 1, 2025. The bill was originally written to take effect October 1, 2021, but a floor amendment was offered by Senator Roger Picard (Woonsocket) to delay the increase to 2022. The amendment passed 22-12. To see how our Senator voted, go to: [The State of Rhode Island General Assembly (rilegislature.gov)](http://webserver.rilegislature.gov/SVotes/votereport.asp?id=12774) Senator Calkin (Warwick) attempted to amend the legislation to increase the tip wage and to require employers to pay hazard pay to employees who work during an emergency. Both amendments failed. S.1aa is now in the House Labor Committee.

**House Labor Studies COVID Liability Bill and Labor Bills**

On Thursday, February 10th the House Labor Committee met to take testimony on a number of bills. H.5264, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Workers Compensation – Occupational Diseases, addresses questions of employer liability related to the COVID-19 virus. H.5265, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Payment of Wages, assesses new penalties on employers that fail to maintain an employee’s health care benefits while that employee is out of work under TCI (the employee must continue to pay any required premium co-share); and for failing to retain the employee’s job or provide a similar job to that employee once he/she returns to work. H.5266, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Unlawful Employment Practices, allows employees to sue employers and individual employees for “directly or indirectly” committing any act considered to be an unfair employment practice under Rhode Island law. All three bills were held for further study.

**Staff Changes in Executive and Legislative Branches**

It’s getting harder to keep up with the various staff changes taking place at the State House. Last week RI Department of Labor and Training Director, Scott Jensen announced that he will step down February 22nd after six years at DLT. The Governor’s Policy Director Nell Abernathy and Senior Deputy Chief of Staff, Kevin Gallagher also announced their departure. Governor Raimondo’s Deputy Chief of Staff, Nicole Verdi, is headed to the Senate as Chief Legal Counsel. Senate President Ruggerio also named his new Chief of Staff – Jake Bisaillon, - after Stephen Iannazzi left to take a job in the private sector. As was announced a few weeks ago, Ray Simone is Speaker Shekarchi’s Chief of Staff, while Nicole McCarty is Chief Legal Counsel. Danica Iacoi is now Chief Legal Counsel to Majority Leader Blazejewski.

The following new bills have been filed:

House Bill No. [5437](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5437.pdf)  Edwards**,**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.) [H5437.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5437.pdf)

House Bill No. [5441](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5441.pdf) Speakman, Casey, Ruggiero, Donovan, Kislak, Morales**,**AN ACT RELATING TO INSURANCE -- INDIVIDUAL HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE (Requires individual health insurers, large group health insurers and small employer health insurers to provide coverage for ten (10) categories of essential health benefits listed in the act.) [H5441.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5441.pdf)

House Bill No. [5445](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5445.pdf) Carson, Cortvriend, Blazejewski, Kazarian, Ruggiero, Donovan, Speakman, Knight, McEntee, Alzate**,**AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT - 2021 ACT ON CLIMATE (Establishes a statewide greenhouse gas emission reduction mandate.) [H5445.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5445.pdf)

House Bill No. [5448](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5448.pdf)  McGaw, Felix, Kislak, Alzate, Potter, Lombardi, McEntee, Tanzi, Ruggiero**,**AN ACT RELATING TO HUMAN SERVICES -- MEDICAID EMPLOYER ASSESSMENT (Creates a Medicaid employees assessment and would require all for profit employers with more than 300 employees to compensate the state 10% of each of their employees' wages, capped of $1500, who are enrolled in Medicaid.) [H5448.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5448.pdf)

House Bill No. [5473](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5473.pdf) Williams, Messier, Vella-Wilkinson, Slater, Alzate**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS - WORKERS' COMPENSATION BENEFITS (Requires employees to prove non-intoxication at time of injury/death after employer shows positive test for intoxication at time of injury/death with recovery of overpayments/minor may recover treble damages from employers.) [H5473.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5473.pdf)

House Bill No. [5509](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5509.pdf) Tobon, Caldwell, Baginski, Alzate, Edwards, Lima, Barros, Corvese, Amore, Craven**,**AN ACT RELATING TO COMMERCIAL LAW--GENERAL REGULATORY PROVISIONS -- UNFAIR SALES PRACTICES (Prohibits the sale for profit of consumer generated Internet data by a social media platform without the consent of and compensation paid to the consumer.) [H5509.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5509.pdf)

House Bill No. [5526](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5526.pdf) Speakman, Knight**,**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.) [H5526.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5526.pdf)

House Bill No. [5583](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5583.pdf) Perez, Vella-Wilkinson, Williams, Cardillo, Shanley

**ENTITLED,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- PARENTAL AND FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE (Grants unpaid pregnancy leave to part-time workers, would clarify their access to unpaid sick leave during their pregnancy, and would provide additional protections for pregnant workers who work in the medical field.) [H5583.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5583.pdf)

House Bill No. [5584](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5584.pdf) Perez, Vella-Wilkinson, Williams, Shanley**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS - UNLAWFUL EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES (Prohibits an employer from inquiring about a prospective employee wage and salary history before an offer of employment with compensation has been negotiated.) [H5584.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5584.pdf)

House Bill No. [5585](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5585.pdf) Amore, Lombardi, Potter, Giraldo, Alzate, Morales**,**AN ACT RELATING TO HOLIDAYS AND DAYS OF SPECIAL OBSERVANCE -- WORK ON HOLIDAYS AND SUNDAYS (Repeals § 5-3-7 of the general laws which gives the director of the department of labor and training the authority to exempt certain classes of employees from receiving overtime pay for Sunday and holiday work.) [H5585.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5585.pdf)

Senate Bill No. [154](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0154.pdf) Sosnowski, Coyne, Miller, McCaffrey, Gallo, Valverde, Euer, DiPalma**,**AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- ECONOMIC AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE ACT OF 2021 (Establishes a fee on companies that sell fossil fuels in Rhode Island and establishes a fund to disburse the collected funds.) [S0154.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0154.pdf)

Senate Bill No. [173](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0173.pdf) Anderson, Calkin, Valverde, Ciccone, Mendes, Ruggerio, Lombardi, Goodwin, Miller, Coyne**,**AN ACT RELATING TO MOTOR AND OTHER VEHICLES - PARKING FACILITIES AND PRIVILEGES (Requires parking lots to designate parking spaces for electric vehicles/installation of charging stations for new existing public/private parking lots with fines for parking violations/compliance. Effective 7/1/21.) [S0173.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0173.pdf)

Senate Bill No. [178](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0178.pdf) Felag**,**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.) [S0178.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0178.pdf)

Senate Bill No. [183](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0183.pdf) Euer, Ruggerio, McCaffrey, Goodwin, Cano, Mack, Kallman, Lombardo, Valverde, DiMario**,**AN ACT RELATING TO PROPERTY -- RESIDENTIAL LANDLORD AND TENANT ACT (Imposes a moratorium on non-essential evictions/mortgage foreclosures during a state of emergency declared by the governor relating to residential property and establishes an eviction diversion program to resolve landlord-tenant eviction disputes.) [S0183.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0183.pdf)

Senate Bill No. [189](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0189.pdf) DiMario, Euer, Murray, Lawson, Valverde, Pearson, Mendes, Mack, Goldin, Anderson**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES (Forbids an employer to require an employee to execute a nondisclosure agreement; or non-disparagement agreement regarding alleged violations of civil rights or criminal conduct as a condition of employment.) [S0189.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0189.pdf)

Senate Bill No. [195](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0195.pdf) McCaffrey, Goodwin, Ruggerio, Murray, Kallman, Ciccone, Lombardo, Valverde, DiMario, DiPalma**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- PAYMENT OF WAGES (Increases the criminal penalties for wage theft and employee misclassification.) [S0195.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0195.pdf)

Senate Bill No. [196](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0196.pdf) Ciccone, Acosta, Calkin, Goodwin, Lawson, Anderson, Valverde, Murray, Bell, DiPalma**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- DIGNITY AT WORK ACT (Establishes the Dignity at Work Act, to provide workers with more protection from bullying and harassment in the workplace.) [S0196.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0196.pdf)

Senate Bill No. [206](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0206.pdf) Sosnowski, Coyne, Seveney, Felag, Gallo**,**AN ACT RELATING TO FISH AND WILDLIFE - COMMERCIAL FISHERIES (Permits dockside sale of fish by commercial fishing license holders.) [S0206.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0206.pdf)

Senate Bill No. [225](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0225.pdf)  Bell, Mendes**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- DEFINITION OF CORPORATE NET INCOME (Repeals a state corporate income tax deduction to allowable income for federal tax purposes for investment property held for at least seven (7) years.) [S0225.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0225.pdf)