**This Week At The State House**

As expected, many new bills were filed this week. The House added 306 bills to their workload. The Senate added 232. More bills will be forthcoming, but this is traditionally the week when the bulk of the bills are put forward. Twenty-six hearings have been scheduled for this week as well. This edition selects some of those hearings for your consideration.

**Tuesday, March 3rd – all to take place At the Rise (approximately 4:30 p.m.)**

The **House Finance Committee** will take public testimony in **Room 35** on the Governor’s budget proposal – **Article 8.** If any of these issues affect your business, please attend and testify. This Article makes the following changes:

* Lowers the manufacturing tax on “still wines” from $1.40 per gallon to $.60 per gallon
* Lowers the manufacturing tax on spirits (whiskey, rum, gin, etc.) from $5.40 per gallon to $3.75 per gallon
* Expands the 7% sales tax to hunting, trapping and shooting services, which would include fishing guides, fishing clubs, archery ranges, shooting clubs, etc.
* Expands the sales tax to lobbying services as defined in RIGL 139.1-3(a). As last year, this specific statute refers to all lobbyists – both contract and in-house lobbyists, meaning organizations with employees acting as lobbyists could be required to pay a sales tax on the employee’s wages associated with the act of lobbying.
* Expands the sales tax to computer system design and related services (projects that require writing, modifying, testing, and supporting software to meet the needs of a particular customer; planning and designing computer systems that integrate computer hardware, software, and communication technologies; providing on-site management and operation of clients' computer systems and/or data processing facilities; and other related services such as computer disaster recovery.
* Expands sales tax to interior design services, and courier and messenger services (the Article specifically states that “delivery charges” are different and not subject to sales tax.
* Allows the State to transfer to the general revenue fund 2% of the local meals and beverage tax collected for the municipalities as an administration fee.
* Eliminates the sales tax exemption for alcoholic beverages sold by Class A licensees (liquor stores)
* Increases the hotel tax from 5% to 6% starting July 1, 2020

**The House Committee on Small Business** will hear two bills in **Room 205** addressing breweries. **H.7890** requires breweries that choose to sell their product for on-site consumption to (1) maintain liquor liability insurance, (2) require their bartenders to complete an alcohol server training program – a program all other Rhode Island bartenders must complete, and (3) comply with Department of Health regulations such as keeping keg lines clean, etc. **H.7891** will also be heard. The bill allows for increased sales of alcohol at breweries to 3 drinks which means two 2 oz of spirits or 2 oz of primary spirits. Breweries would also be able to increase their off-premise sales to twelve 750 ml bottles of beer or twenty-four 375 ml bottles of distilled spirits per visitor, per day.

**House Judiciary** will meet in the **House Lounge**. One bill on the agenda is **H.7539**. If an employer fails to pay an employee wages amounting to more than $1500, that employer would be guilty of a felony. If the amount owed is between $1500 and $5000, the penalty is up to $1500 and up to 3 years in prison. If the amount owed is between $5000 and $10,000, the penalty is a fine of up to $3000 and up to 6 years in prison. If the amount is greater than $10,000, the penalty is up to $5000 and up to 10 years in prison. Under current law, these violations are misdemeanors.

**Wednesday, March 4th at the Rise (approximately 4:30 pm)**

**The House Labor Committee** will be discussing a number of bills Wednesday. **H.7466** would raise the tip wage $.50 each year until it reaches 2/3 of the current minimum wage. After that, the tip wage would increase in conjunction with any minimum wage increase so that it always remains 2/3 of the minimum wage. **H.7570** raises the minimum wage to $15 per hour and then ties it to the Consumer Price Index thereafter.

**H.7875 – Predictive Scheduling** will also be heard in the House Labor Committee. This bill requires employers to do the following:

\* Upon hiring, an employer must provide each employee with a good faith estimate in writing, of the number of hours and the days and times the employee is expected to work each week.

\* Employees must be given a written schedule for a period of 14 days throughout the employment

\* Employees can decline to work any hours not included in the 14 day schedule, and if such change is agreed to, the employer must provide the employee with a revised schedule reflecting the change within 24 hours

\* Employers must post, in a public place, the schedule for all employees working or on call

\* If an employer adds or subtracts hours within the 14 day schedule, the employee is entitled to “predictability pay” in addition to wages. “Predictability pay” is defined as payments to an employee, calculated on an hourly basis at the employee's regular rate of pay, as compensation for changes made by an employer to an employee's schedule pursuant to § 28-12.1-4, in addition to any wages earned for work performed by that employee.” This is basically double time pay.

\* Employees are entitled to 4 hours of pay (or less if the scheduled shift is less than 4 hours) if the employee shows up for work and is sent home or if the employee is notified less than 24 hours before the shift begins, that the employee is not needed. Predictability pay is not required under these circumstances – only regular pay.

\* An employee has the right to decline work hours that occur less than 11 hours after the end of a previous day’s shift, during the 11 hours that follows the end of a shift that spanned 2 days, and work that is more than 6 consecutive days.

\* H.7875 also includes a section that calls for equal hourly pay for employees and opportunities for advancement if the skills, duties and responsibilities are substantially the same. Different wages are permitted for seniority or a merit system.

\* Lastly, employees are entitled to a “retention pay” of $150 per week. So if a weather event occurs closing the business, employees must be paid at least $150 per week if they are unable to work do to the business closure.

**The bill can be viewed at this link:**

House Bill No. [7875](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7875.pdf) Williams, Ucci**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- HOURS AND SCHEDULING (Requires employers to give their employees at least two (2) weeks notice of their work schedule and other notices scheduling rights and remedies.)

**Thursday, March 5th at the Rise (approximately 4:30 pm)**

**House Environment Committee will meet in Room 101**. **H.7399** will likely get plenty of attention. This bill mandates that Rhode Island meet specific greenhouse gas emission reductions. The State would be required to reduce emissions 10% below 1990 levels by 2020 (this milestone has already been met); 50% reduction in emissions by 2035 (current law calls for trying to meet 45%); and net-zero emissions by 2050 (current law calls for trying to meet 80%). The big difference in this bill – aside from the percentage increases – is the mandatory nature of the targets. Current law sets these percentages as goals to try to meet if possible. H.7399 allows individuals to file suit in Superior Court if the targets are not met; and calls for the payment of attorneys’ fees to bring the case. The introduction of the mandatory nature of this bill would allow the Governor and the Climate Change Commission to unilaterally take actions such as the cap and trade program proposed under TCI, mandating the purchase of electric vehicles by the public, mandate buildings be converted to electric heat, institute a vehicle miles travel tax on drivers…all without any legislative approval. This bill could prove very costly to businesses and residents with no avenue for expressing opposition to the proposals.

The following bills were filed last week:

Senate Bill No. [2494](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/SenateText20/S2494.pdf) Pearson, Conley, DiPalma, Seveney, Satchell**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION - PERSONAL INCOME TAX (Creates a new income tax bracket of 6.99% on taxable income over five hundred thousand dollars. Any tax collected on this income deposited into restricted receipt account and expended on education for grades kindergarten through twelfth grade.)

Senate Bill No. [2513](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/SenateText20/S2513.pdf) McKenney, Sheehan, Cano, Valverde, Sosnowski**,**AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- BEVERAGE CONTAINER DEPOSIT RECYCLING ACT OF 2020 (Creates a refundable five cent ($0.05) deposit for non-reusable beverage containers. A one cent ($0.01) handling fee would be paid by distributors.)

Senate Bill No. [2516](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/SenateText20/S2516.pdf) Satchell, Seveney, Bell, Conley**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- PERSONAL INCOME TAX (Creates three new categories of taxable income for income above $232,000.)

Senate Bill No. [2524](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/SenateText20/S2524.pdf)  Goodwin, Miller, McCaffrey, Goldin, DiPalma**,**AN ACT RELATING TO INSURANCE -- LIFETIME LIMITS (Revokes the authority of the health insurance commissioner's ability to enforce a ruling of the federal government or federal court that revokes the prohibition on limits on health insurance.)

Senate Bill No. [2525](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/SenateText20/S2525.pdf) Miller, Goldin, Valverde, Satchell, Goodwin**,**AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- THE RHODE ISLAND HEALTH CARE REFORM ACT OF 2004--HEALTH INSURANCE OVERSIGHT (This act would have the health insurance commissioner adopt a uniform set of medical criteria for prior authorization and create required form to be used by a health insurer.)

Senate Bill No. [2554](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/SenateText20/S2554.pdf) McKenney**,**AN ACT RELATING TO COURTS AND CIVIL PROCEDURE -- PROCEDURE IN PARTICULAR ACTIONS--JOINT AND SEVERAL LIABILITY (This act would limit liability of a tortfeasor for damages to several only and not joint, if it is found that the defendant’s act or omission caused no more than twenty-five percent (25%) of the damages sustained by the plaintiff.)

Senate Bill No. [2555](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/SenateText20/S2555.pdf) Lombardi, Lombardo, Ciccone, Archambault, Rogers**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION—SURETY BOND FOR TAX CREDITS (Requires an individual seeking a tax credit on property with a value greater than five million dollars must submit affidavit stating there are no outstanding liens.)

Senate Bill No. [2558](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/SenateText20/S2558.pdf) Sheehan, Satchell, Crowley, Nesselbush, Sosnowski**,**AN ACT RELATING TO COURTS AND CIVIL PROCEDURE - PROCEDURE GENERALLY - NONDISCLOSURE AGREEMENTS (Places limits on the terms that can be included in an agreement that settles a claim of sexual harassment, retaliation for reporting sexual harassment and stalking.)

Senate Bill No. [2561](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/SenateText20/S2561.pdf) McKenney**,**AN ACT RELATING TO COURTS AND CIVIL PROCEDURE -- PROCEDURE GENERALLY (This act would reduce the statutory interest on judgments for money in civil actions from twelve percent (12%) to six percent (6%).)

Senate Bill No. [2569](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/SenateText20/S2569.pdf) Lynch Prata, McCaffrey, Lombardi**,**AN ACT RELATING TO COURTS AND CIVIL PROCEDURE--PROCEDURE IN PARTICULAR ACTIONS -- THE JOINT TORTFEASOR ACT (This act would allow a release by the injured person of one joint tortfeasor to relieve that tortfeasor from liability to make contribution to another joint tortfeasor.)

Senate Bill No. [2576](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/SenateText20/S2576.pdf) Quezada, Metts, Crowley, Cano, Goodwin**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS (For proposed wages, workers' compensation, temporary disability and unemployment benefits this act creates a new definition for "employee".)

Senate Bill No. [2582](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/SenateText20/S2582.pdf) Cano, Valverde, Conley, Goldin, Euer**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- RHODE ISLAND PARENTAL AND FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE ACT (Increases the amount of parental or family leave available to an employee from thirteen (13) weeks to twenty-six (26) weeks in any two (2) calendar years.)

Senate Bill No. [2588](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/SenateText20/S2588.pdf)  McCaffrey, Lombardi, Lynch Prata, Ruggerio, Ciccone**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- PAYMENT OF WAGES (Increases the criminal penalties for wage theft and employee misclassification.)

House Bill No. [7658](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7658.pdf) Marszalkowski**,**AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- MANUFACTURING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT--TAX INCENTIVES (Establishes the "refundable investment tax credit act" to provide for a refundable investment tax credit for certain investments in the construction of facilities, acquisition of tangible property, and the training of employees in the state.)

House Bill No. [7659](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7659.pdf) Kennedy, Azzinaro, Johnston, Casey, Solomon**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- PROPERTY SUBJECT TO TAXATION (Amends the classification of manufacturing machinery that is eligible for a property tax exemption.)

House Bill No. [7661](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7661.pdf) Blazejewski, Caldwell, Slater, Alzate, Casimiro**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- TEMPORARY DISABILITY INSURANCE--GENERAL PROVISIONS (Increases taxable wage base for TDI/TCI contributions/coverage/maximum weeks for TC leave/provides fines/penalties for non-reinstatement of employee/creates tax credit for low wage employees.)

House Bill No. [7663](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7663.pdf) McNamara, Alzate, Casimiro, Jackson, Ackerman**,**AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- STATE BUILDING CODE (Increases the levy on total construction costs that cities and towns may charge for building permits and directs that fifty percent (50%) each of the levy be transmitted monthly to the department of labor and training for workforce training.)

House Bill No. [7684](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7684.pdf) Walsh, Ranglin-Vassell**,**AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM (Repeals the “Rhode Island Health Care Reform Act of 2004 – Health Insurance Oversight” and the “Rhode Island Health Benefit Exchange.” Establishes a universal, comprehensive, affordable single-payer health care insurance program to cut health care costs.)

House Bill No. [7695](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7695.pdf) Chippendale, Price, Roberts, Place, Nardone**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- TAX CREDITS FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO SCHOLARSHIP ORGANIZATIONS (Increases the total aggregate amount of tax credits for contributions to scholarship organizations by a business entity meeting the requisite criteria to five million dollars in fiscal year 2021 and includes definition for an "eligible business entity".)

House Bill No. [7699](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7699.pdf) Ruggiero, Shanley, Shekarchi, Barros, McEntee**,**AN ACT RELATING TO INSURANCE - ACCIDENT AND SICKNESS INSURANCE POLICIES (Requires Medicare option after 11/1/21 allowing employee to elect Medicare coverage with family members retaining coverage under employer's policy plan only with employer's approval.)

House Bill No. [7723](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7723.pdf) Edwards, Shanley, Barros, Cassar, Carson**,**AN ACT RELATING TO COMMERCIAL LAW -- GENERAL REGULATORY PROVISIONS -- ESTABLISHING THE "CONSUMER PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION ACT OF 2020" (Regulates data brokers. Data brokers would be required to annually register; to provide substantive notifications to consumers; and to adopt comprehensive data security programs.)

House Bill No. [7725](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7725.pdf) Marszalkowski**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- PAYMENT OF WAGES (Increases the criminal penalties for wage theft and employee misclassification.)

House Bill No. [7783](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7783.pdf) Place, Quattrocchi, Nardone, Filippi**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- RIGHT TO EARN A LIVING ACT (Establishes procedures to ensure that agency regulations do not unjustly restrict individuals from entering into businesses, professions and public services requiring articulable, legitimate public health, safety and welfare objectives.)

House Bill No. [7802](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7802.pdf) Bennett, Slater, Amore, Blazejewski, Mendez**,**AN ACT RELATING TO FOOD AND DRUGS -- SANITATION IN FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS (Defines what constitutes a multi-use food and beverage storage container and provides for sanitary use of said containers.)

House Bill No. [7807](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7807.pdf) (by request) Solomon, Ranglin-Vassell**,**AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY -- LIFE-SAVING ALLERGY MEDICATION--STOCK SYRINGE EPINEPHRINE AUTO-INJECTORS--EMERGENCY ADMINISTRATION (Requires the owner's or operators of any public place, which is an area capable of holding 300 people or more and to which the public is invited or permitted to have available epinephrine auto-injectors and trained personnel to administer it.)

House Bill No. [7850](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7850.pdf) Ruggiero, Carson, Vella-Wilkinson, Knight, Craven**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- LEVY AND ASSESSMENT OF LOCAL TAXES (Authorizes cities and towns to classify residential property that is rented for more than thirty (30) non-consecutive days in a calendar year as a Class 2 property.)

House Bill No. [7872](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7872.pdf) Kazarian, Carson, McEntee, Fogarty, Shekarchi**,**AN ACT RELATING TO FOOD AND DRUGS -- PLASTIC RECYCLING AND LITTER ACT (Creates voluntary, no charge program for caterers/mobile food vendors/restaurants for reduction of plastic/other disposal waste with successful completion resulting in year exemption from payment for litter control permit.)

House Bill No. [7877](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7877.pdf) Amore, Serodio, Blazejewski, Slater, Kazarian**,**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.

House Bill No. [7914](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7914.pdf) Shanley, Barros**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS - MINIMUM WAGES (Requires employers with 5 or more persons with developmental disabilities to pay employees no less than $15.00/hr and to have state and general revenue/federal funds appropriated to BHDDH programs to adjust minimum wage increase.)

House Bill No. [7916](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7916.pdf) Ucci**,**AN ACT RELATING TO COURTS AND CIVIL PROCEDURE - PROCEDURES GENERALLY (Provides an employer that completed a reasonable background investigation of an employee prior to hiring with a presumption that the employer was not negligent in hiring that employee.)

House Bill No. [7921](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7921.pdf) Alzate, Amore, Williams, Blazejewski, Jackson**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- PERSONAL INCOME TAX (Adds one new income tax bracket for purposes of state income taxation.)

House Bill No. [7935](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7935.pdf) Tanzi, Alzate, Ranglin-Vassell, Handy, Cortvriend**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- UNLAWFUL EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES (Prohibits employer/employment agency/labor organization/employer to directly/indirectly commit unlawful employment practice.)

House Bill No. [7936](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText20/HouseText20/H7936.pdf) Tanzi, Walsh, Ajello, Cassar, Kislak**,**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.)