**Last Week at the State House**

**Senate Labor Committee Passes Bullying Bill**

On a 7-1 vote, the members of the Senate Labor Committee voted to recommend passage of S.196, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Dignity At Work Act. Those voting in favor were: Senators Burke, Ciccone, Goldin, Lombardi, Lombardo, Picard and Sosnowski. Voting against the bill was Senator de la Cruz. The bill would allow employees to sue fellow workers and/or the employer for acts deemed as bullying. Such acts include: overbearing supervision, withholding information or training to harm an employee, pestering, gossiping, moving an employee’s personal items or equipment, physically or mentally causing an employee harm, et al. The chamber testified against the bill. The full Senate will vote on the bill during today’s session that starts at 4:00 p.m.

**ISO New England Provides Electricity Update**

ISO New England appeared before the Senate Committee on Environment and Agriculture last week to provide an update on the condition of New England’s electricity marketplace. New England is part of what is referred to as the “eastern connection,” meaning New England states south to Florida and west to the foot of the Rockies are all part of one system. The states are dependent upon one another. ISO New England is the independent, not-for-profit company [authorized by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)](https://www.iso-ne.com/about/what-we-do/in-depth/industry-standards-structure-and-relationships) to perform three critical, complex, interconnected roles: 1. Operate the regional electrical grid; 2. Market energy within the region; and 3. Plan for future electricity needs. According to ISO, no net growth in electricity is occurring in the New England region. While there is growth in the marketplace, energy efficiency programs have driven down demand for electricity. About 7,000 MW of generating capacity are set retire. A coal plant in Bridgeport will be closing and two older fossil fuel plants are closing. Currently there are proposals for new plants, that if all were completed and operational, would add 24,420 MW of electricity to the grid. However, many times proposed plants do not see their way to completion. ISO is in the process of completing studies to determine what will be needed to meet the greenhouse gas reduction targets passed by Massachusetts and Rhode Island and Connecticut. The results of the studies are expected by the end of 2021.

**This Week at the State House**

**Governor McKee’s Budget** is expected to be delivered Thursday. The challenge is to close a projected deficit of about $329 million without knowing all the details of the latest 600+ page federal stimulus bill. The State’s 76th Governor has indicated, in public, that he is not inclined to include any tax increases in his budget unless absolutely necessary. The stimulus package may help make that possible. Governor McKee also named a number of key staff members:

Anthony Silva, Chief of Staff

Joy Vaudreuil, Director of Scheduling

Antonio Afonso, Senior Deputy Chief of Staff

Chris Abhulime, Deputy Chief of Staff

Kim Ahern, Policy Director and Senior Counsel

Tom Mullaney, Senior Advisor (on loan from the Office of Management and Budget)

Chris Farrell, Senior Advisor to the Governor

Kevin Horan, Director of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs

Guerline Aurelus, Director of Constituent Services

Cheyenne Cazeault, Policy Advisor

Rosa DeCastillo, Director of Community Affairs and Outreach

Craig Dwyer, Manager of Appointments

Andrea Palagi, Director of Communications

Joseph Polisena Jr. Deputy Counsel on Policy

Claire Richards, Executive Counsel

**House Labor Has Full Agenda Wednesday**

Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. the House Labor Committee will take on a full agenda of wage, benefit and construction bills. *H.5938*, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Minimum Wage, increases the minimum wage to $13 starting July 1, 2021, to $14 July 1, 2022, to $15 July 1, 2023, and by CPI index starting July 1, 2024. *H.6012*, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Tipped Wages, increases the tipped wage to $6.95 on January 1, 2022; to $8.95 January 1, 2023, to $10.95 January 1, 2024, to $12.95 January 1, 2025, to $14.95 January 1, 2026, and to minimum wage January 1, 2026. Currently tipped employees are paid $3.89 per hour plus tips received. Employers are required to pay wages equal to the state’s minimum wage if the employee does not receive enough tips to equal minimum wage. *H.5722*, An Act Relating to Public Property and Works, requires construction companies, that wish to bid on a public school construction project of $5 million or more, to employ apprentices. Ten percent of the employees working on the project must be apprentices. While proponents point to the need to bring young people into the construction trades as a reason to pass the legislation, the 10% apprenticeship requirement essentially limits bidders to union companies. Union construction companies request necessary apprentices from a union hall. Non-union companies must have apprentices as full-time employees, making it much more difficult to comply with the requirement. *H.6089*, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Permanent Replacement Employees, prohibits employers from permanently replacing an employee who has participated in an authorized union strike against the employer or another employer. *H.6090*, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Temporary Disability Insurance, increases the temporary caregiver benefit from six weeks to 8 weeks starting January 1, 2023.

**Product Liability Bill - Wednesday**

H.5867, An Act Relating to Courts and Civil Procedure, is on the agenda of the House Judiciary Committee Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. The bill changes a manufacturer’s liability in the event the person who purchase the item alters it and then harms him/herself. Currently the alternation can be a complete bar to recovery. H.5867 would change the liability to comparative negligence, meaning a court or jury would decide how much of the damage caused was due to the alternation of the product and the award of damages to the claimant would be adjusted to reflect the percentage at fault.

The following new bills have been filed:

House Bill No. [5912](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5912.pdf)  Lombardi**,**AN ACT RELATING TO INSURANCE -- COVID-19 PANDEMIC INSURANCE RECOVERY ACT (Allows businesses that had an insurance policy in place for business interruption as of March 9, 2019 to recover from their insurance companies for a COVID-19 business impact.) [H5912.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5912.pdf)

House Bill No. [5938](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5938.pdf)  Ranglin-Vassell, Ajello, Barros, Kislak, Fogarty, Cassar, Alzate, Henries**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS --MINIMUM WAGES (Provides increases to the minimum wage in 2021, 2022, and 2023 and implements a permanent formula to provide annual adjustments to the minimum wage thereafter.) [H5938.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5938.pdf)

House Bill No. [5939](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5939.pdf) Ranglin-Vassell, Henries, Shekarchi, Bennett, Ajello, Fogarty, Cassar, Barros**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- WAGES (Increases the minimum wage by using an annual fixed amount until 1/1/25, where it reaches to $15 per hour, then raised annually thereafter by using the CPI-W. Also raises hourly minimum wage for employees receiving gratuities by using similar scale.) [H5939.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5939.pdf)

House Bill No. [5959](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5959.pdf) Shanley, Marszalkowski, Craven, Ruggiero, Barros**,**AN ACT RELATING TO COMMERCIAL LAW -- GENERAL REGULATORY PROVISIONS -- RHODE ISLAND TRANSPARENCY AND PRIVACY PROTECTION ACT (Creates the "Rhode Island data Transparency and Privacy Protection Act" to identify information collected by online service providers and commercial websites.) [H5959.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5959.pdf)

House Bill No. [5984](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5984.pdf) (Secretary of State) Shallcross Smith**,**AN ACT RELATING TO CORPORATIONS, ASSOCIATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS -- RHODE ISLAND BUSINESS CORPORATION ACT (Requires that annual reports of domestic and foreign business corporations, nonprofit corporations, and limited liability companies be filed with the secretary of state between February 1 and May 1 of each year.) [H5984.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5984.pdf)

House Bill No. [5985](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5985.pdf) Ackerman, Solomon, Knight, Craven**,**AN ACT RELATING TO INSURANCE -- RHODE ISLAND TITLE INSURERS ACT (Provides that only RI attorneys can act as title insurance agents and determine insurability and marketability. Limits discount title insurance premiums and restricts sharing premiums.) [H5985.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H5985.pdf)

House Bill No. [6012](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H6012.pdf) Felix, Henries, Potter, Batista, Barros, Cassar, Morales**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- TIPPED MINIMUM WAGE (Gradually increases the tipped minimum wage from the current $3.89 to $14.95 commencing January 1, 2026 and on January 1, 2027 the tipped minimum wage shall be no less than the minimum wage established by the minimum wage law.) [H6012.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H6012.pdf)

House Bill No. [6055](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H6055.pdf) Barros**,**AN ACT RELATING TO COMMERCIAL LAW -- GENERAL REGULATORY PROVISIONS -- DECEPTIVE TRADE PRACTICES (Creates consumer legislation designed to limit in-application payments for software applications and purchases.) [H6055.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/HouseText21/H6055.pdf)

Senate Bill No. [471](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0471.pdf) DiMario, Kallman, Euer, Valverde, Anderson**,**AN ACT RELATING TO FOOD AND DRUGS -- FORCE-FED POULTRY PRODUCTS (Prohibits a retail food or a food service establishment from the sale of any force-fed poultry product or food containing a force-fed poultry product and would impose a civil penalty of $500 for each violation.) [S0471.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0471.pdf)

Senate Bill No. [515](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0515.pdf) Lawson, Quezada, Murray, Euer, Cano, Lombardi, Kallman, Acosta, Ciccone, Goodwin**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- IMPLANTATION DEVICES AS CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT (Prohibits an employer from subjecting its employees or prospective employees to the implantation of an implantation device. It creates criminal penalties as well as civil damages, that may be assessed against violating employers.) [S0515.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0515.pdf)

Senate Bill No. [545](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0545.pdf) Euer, Ciccone, Kallman, Valverde, DiMario, Lawson, Cano, Murray, Sosnowski, Goodwin**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- TIPPED MINIMUM WAGE (Gradually increases the tipped minimum wage from the current three dollars and eighty-nine cents ($3.89) to sixteen dollars and ninety-five cents ($16.95) over the course of five (5) years, between 2022 and 2027.) [S0545.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0545.pdf)

Senate Bill No. [546](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0546.pdf) Mack, Acosta, Calkin, Anderson, Bell, Miller, Murray**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- PERMANENT REPLACEMENT EMPLOYEES (Prohibits an employer from permanently replacing an employee who has participated or honored a union authorized strike.) [S0546.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0546.pdf)