**Last Week at the State House**

All of the bills reported to you last week were held for further study, a formal procedure which keeps the bills alive through the remainder of the session (S.2093, – receivership act for businesses; S.2104 – customer privacy protection policy; H.7500, H.7503, and H.7560 – health care coverage mandates; S.2486 – workplace bullying bill, and S.2209 – EV infrastructure requirement in new parking lots or expanding parking lots.). The Senate Labor Committee announced that it is planning to bring forward a re-draft of S.2486, the workplace bullying bill. We will distribute that substitute bill as soon as it is available.

**This Week at the State House**

**Tuesday, March 15th**

**Adult Marijuana** use is scheduled for a Senate Judiciary hearing Tuesday at the Rise (approximately 4:30 pm) in Room 313 at the State House. S.2430, An Act Relating to Food and Drugs – Rhode Island Cannabis Act legalizes marijuana use for adults 21 years of age and older. It creates the RI Cannabis Control Commission to oversee the regulation, licensing and control of adult use and medical marijuana use. The bill allows for up to 24 retail establishments to be licensed in the first year (restricted to a maximum of 4 in a geographic zone). S.2430 establishes a new 10% state excise tax, a new local excise tax of 3%, and includes the 7% retail sales tax, for a total tax of 20%. More importantly, the bill does attempt to provide some protections for employers. The bill states that an employer is not required to accommodate the medical use of marijuana in any workplace. Workers’ compensation benefits are not required to cover medical marijuana. Employers are not required to accommodate the use or possession of cannabis, or being under the influence of cannabis in any workplace; however, employers also cannot discipline or fire an employee “solely for an employee’s private, lawful use of cannabis outside the workplace and as long as the employee has not and is not working under the influence of cannabis.” There are exemptions for federal contractors where the federal law requires a no tolerance policy, as well as for hazardous professions. Employers may prohibit the use of cannabis within 24 hours prior to a work shift or assignment, but to date there is no test that would confirm such use. The Chamber is working with other business groups to: (1) clarify the definition of “workplace” which has become more complicated due to the increase in remote work; (2) request state funded training for HR directors and business owners to learn how to detect marijuana impairment in employees; and (3) request the ability to drug test employees performing hazardous jobs. The bill can be viewed at: <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2430.pdf>

The House Committee on State Government and Elections is meeting at the Rise (approximately 4:30 pm) in Room 101 at the State House. H.7743, An Act Relating to Motor and Other Vehicles – Parking Facilities and Privileges, will be heard. This bill requires most parking lots with over 100 spaces to create specifically designed spaces for individuals transporting young children that require the use of strollers. Properties zoned industrial are exempt, as are multi-family residences. Parking lots with 101-500 spaces would be required to create two such spaces; lots with 501-1000 spaces would need to create three spaces; and lots with more than 1001 spaces would add one additional space for each 500 spaces over 1001. Lot owners are responsible for the cost of signage and painting of spaces. The bill also outlines the specific dimensions of the spaces. If you wish to submit testimony via email, send it to: **HouseStateGovernmentandElections@rilegislature.gov**

Remember to place your name, bill number, and viewpoint in the subject line. Pdf format is preferred. The bill can be viewed at: <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7743.pdf>

**Wednesday, March 16th**

Employee wages are the topic of the day for the House Labor Committee on Wednesday, at 4:00 pm, in House Lounge at the State House.

H.7348, incrementally increases the tipped wage for employees starting January 1, 2023. The current tipped wage is $3.89 per hour. This means that the restaurant must pay the tipped employee $3.89 per hour. The employee then receives tips from customers. If the tips do not bring the employee to the Rhode Island minimum wage of $12.25, the restaurant must pay the difference. No employee is permitted to legally make less than $12.25 per hour. H.7348 raises the initial tipped wage to $6.95, January 1, 2023; $8.95 January 1, 2024; $10.95 January 1, 2025; $12.95 January 1, 2026; $14.95 January 1, 2027; and to the state’s minimum wage by January 1, 2028. Should this bill pass, many restaurants have stated they will transition to a European model which excludes customer tipping.

H.7575, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations (*Representatives Morales, Potter, Ranglin-Vassell, McGaw, Batista, Biah, Kislak, Henries, Speakman, and Williams*) repeals state preemption of minimum wage. This law was adopted as part of the negotiations between labor advocates and the business community when the minimum wage increase bill was passed in 2014. The business community agreed to a phase-in of higher minimum wages, if all of the communities in the state were bound by the same minimum wage. This avoids confusion, payroll mistakes, and employee morale issues. *Please contact your state legislators and ask them to oppose the passage of H.7575.* There is no Senate companion bill at this time, but not all of the bills have been formally introduced.

H.7765, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations proposes to change the minimum wage phase-in schedule. Under current law the minimum wage is set to increase to $13 on January 1, 2023, $14 on January 1, 2024 and $15 on January 1, 2025. H.7765 increases that jump to $14.50 on January 1, 2023, $16.75 on January 1, 2024, $19 on January 1, 2025, and then increases the wage every year thereafter in accordance with the CPI index.

If you wish to submit written testimony on any of these bills, email the testimony to HouseLabor@rilegislature.gov and include your name, bill number, and viewpoint in the subject of the email (pdf format is preferred). If you wish to testify in person, go to the House Lounge at 3:45 and sign up to testify.

The following new bills have been filed:

House Bill No. [7917](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7917.pdf) McNamara**,**AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- RHODE ISLAND INFORMATION PRIVACY ACT (Allows an individual to access and learn what personal information about the individual has been gathered and stored by covered entities that conduct business in Rhode Island.) <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7917.pdf>

House Bill No. [7920](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7920.pdf) Tobon, Barros**,**AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- STATE BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY LIVE, WORK, AND PLAY PARKS (Establishes the state business technology live, work, and play parks program, to be administered by the commerce corporation.) <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7920.pdf>

House Bill No. [7922](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7922.pdf) Tobon, Barros**,**AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- RHODE ISLAND COMMERCE CORPORATION (Establishes the retailer competitive grants revolving fund to award grants, through a competitive process, to local on the ground businesses.) <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7922.pdf>

House Bill No. [7928](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7928.pdf) (Dept. of Revenue) Abney**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- STATE TAX OFFICIALS (Defines "large business registrant" and requires the large business registrant to file returns and remit taxes electronically with fines for failure to do so.) <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H7928.pdf>

Senate Bill No. [2584](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2584.pdf) DiPalma, Kallman, DiMario, Lombardo, Ciccone, Euer, McCaffrey**,**AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- JUST TRANSITION TO CLEAN ENERGY (Establishes just transition office assisted by 18 member advisory committee within DLT to support displaced fossil fuel workers in transition to carbon free economy.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2584.pdf>

Senate Bill No. [2592](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2592.pdf) Cano, Kallman, Acosta, McCaffrey, Goodwin, Ruggerio**,**AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- RHODE ISLAND HARD-HIT LIQUIDITY PROGRAM ACT (Establishes the “Rhode Island Hard-Hit Emergency Liquidity Program Act” to provide up to twenty million dollars ($20,000,000) to businesses adversely affected by the Coronavirus pandemic by providing aid for drop in sales.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2592.pdf>

Senate Bill No. [2593](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2593.pdf) Mack, Bell, Anderson, Calkin, Acosta, Mendes**,**AN ACT RELATING TO TAXATION -- PERSONAL INCOME TAX (Adds one new income tax bracket for purposes of Rhode Island state income taxation. The new bracket would be a rate of ten and ninety-nine one-hundredths percent (10.99%) on taxable income over four hundred thousand five hundred dollars ($400,500).)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2593.pdf>

Senate Bill No. [2634](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2634.pdf) Mack, Bell, Anderson, Calkin, Acosta**,**AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- THE GREEN JUSTICE ZONE ACT (Establishes the first Green Justice Zone, a model that may be replicated in future years to ensure that all communities throughout the state have clean air and clean water.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2634.pdf>

Senate Bill No. [2665](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2665.pdf) Anderson, Acosta, Bell, Calkin, Kallman, Mack, Mendes, Euer, Quezada**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- MINIMUM WAGES (Repeals the law that prevented municipalities from establishing their own minimum wage for their employees.)

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/SenateText22/S2665.pdf>