**Last Week at the State House**

All of the bills mention in last week’s edition were held for further study: S.2243 (parental leave expansion), S.2245 (TDI expansion), S.2130 (employee commuter benefits), S.2075 (employer tax for Children Relief Fund), and S.2274 (increase renewable source for electricity).

State’s Landfill Update – RI Resource Recovery provided an update on the status of the State’s landfill. The good news is that the life expectancy of the site has been extended from 2036 to 2040. The extension was achieved by increasing the fees for disposal. Because the fees were so low, the landfill was attracting customers from all over the state. With the increase in fees, certain customers found it more feasible to use other landfill sites for disposal needs. The landfill takes in 650,000 tons of waste a year. Approximately 23% of the items placed into recycling bins are contaminated and make their way back to the landfill.

**This Week at the State House**

**Wednesday, April 6th**

The Chamber has been asking, and the House Oversight Committee has answered the call. On Wednesday at 1:30pm in the House Lounge, the Committee will hear from a number of agencies concerning renewable energy programs in Rhode Island. Policy programs from 100% renewable electricity supply, to electric vehicle sale requirements, to electrification of all buildings in the state are up for consideration. Rhode Island has one of the highest electricity rates in the country. If the transition to renewable energy is not planned out carefully and data driven, the economy will suffer and supply may not keep pace with demand. The Committee will hear from: Linda George, Administrator of the Division of Public Utilities; Karen Stewart, Renewable Energy Fund Program Director for RI Commerce Corporation; and Chris Kearns, Policy and Legislative Liaison for the Office of Energy Resources. The meeting will be live streamed at https://www.rilegislature.gov/CapTV/Pages/default.aspx

The Senate Labor Committee will hear a bill requested by the Rhode Island Department of Labor. S.2816, An Act Related to Labor and Labor Relations – Employment Security, extends the partial unemployment insurance benefits put into place during the pandemic. S.2816 extends the increase in the total amount of earning a partial -unemployment insurance claimant can receive before being disqualified for benefits. It also extends the increase in the amount of earnings that is disregarded when calculating the claimant’s weekly benefit. These additional benefits are set to expire June 30, 2022. S.2816 would extend the benefits to June 30, 2023. The hearing will take place at 4:00 pm in room 211 at the state house.

**Thursday, April 7th**

Two committee meetings of interest are scheduled for Thursday – Senate Commerce and House Labor.

Senate Commerce, scheduled to meet at the Rise (approximately 4:30 pm) in room 310, will take testimony S.2688, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Consumer Credit History Employment Protection Act, prohibits employers from asking questions about a job applicant’s financial past or from checking their credit history. There are exemptions for those seeking jobs where a credit check is required under state or federal law, or a national security clearance; where the person would have signatory authority over third parties worth $10,000 or more; non-clerical positions with access to trade secrets; or positions with the ability to modify digital security systems. If the job falls within an exemption, the employer must inform the applicant and obtain written permission prior to running the credit check.

The House Labor Committee will meet at the Rise in room 101 on Thursday. What is expected to be a busy and potentially long meeting will include the following bills:

* H.7177, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations RI Parental and Family Medical Leave Act, increases employees parental leave from thirteen weeks to twenty-four weeks over a two-year period. Under current law, employers with fifty or more employees fall under parental leave; and employees become eligible for the leave after working for one year with the employer. H.7177 does not change the thresholds for number of employees or time of work required for eligibility.
* H.7718, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Workers Compensation, classifies a Covid related illness as an occupational disease for health care workers, those working in long-term care settings, essential workers and public safety workers. An “essential worker” is defined as “any employee whose employment is necessary for the continued health and safety of the community, including, but not limited to, grocery or transportation workers…”
* H.7903 and H.8038, Acts Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Fair Employment Practices, prohibit an employer or an employee for “directly or indirectly, committing any act deemed to be an unlawful employment practice. If passed, individuals such as human resource staff or individual employees, can be held personally liable. The bills would take effect upon passage and ***apply to all pending cases and claims.***
* H.7905, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Fair Employment Practices, prohibits employers from requiring 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.

If you wish to submit written testimony on any of these bills, email your name, bill number and position (in the subject line), along with your testimony, to [**HouseLabor@rilegislature.gov**](mailto:HouseLabor@rilegislature.gov)

Testimony should be submitted by 1:00 pm, Thursday.

The following new bill has been filed:

House Bill No. [8074](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H8074.pdf) Solomon**,**AN ACT RELATING TO PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CARRIERS -- LABOR STANDARDS IN RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS (Established labor standards applicable to renewable energy projects and conditions/procedures for applicants related to labor agreements with enforcement by department of labor and training (DLT).) <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText22/HouseText22/H8074.pdf>