**Budget Process Heats Up**

The General Assembly is back as it begins the final phase of the 2021 legislative session. Over the next two months bills will be passed and sent to the Governor for consideration and the FY2022 budget will be amended and passed. Much of the expert budget testimony will be unveiled in the next two weeks, with the final budget numbers being debated and decided upon on May 10th.

The following are key dates for the May Estimating Conference:

*Monday, April 26, 2021 – Cash Assistance and Medical Caseloads*

9:00 A.M. Department of Human Services and Executive Office of Health and Human Services

*Friday, April 30, 2021 – Economic Overview and Testimony*

9:00 A.M. US and RI Economic Forecasts – IHS Markit James Bohnaker, Economist Michael Lynch, Economist Consensus Economic Forecast

10:30 A.M. Lottery Receipts - Department of Revenue, Division of Lottery Mark Furcolo, Director, Division of Lottery Accruals – Accounts and Controls Peter Keenan, State Controller

*Monday May 3, 2021 – Tax Collections*

1:00 P .M Department of Revenue, Division of Taxation Neena Savage, State Tax Administrator

*Wednesday May 5, 2021 – Caseload Estimate*

9:00 A.M. Caseload Estimating Conference

*Thursday May 6, 2021 – Testimony (if necessary)*

9:00 A.M Tax Collections – Department of Revenue, Division of Taxation Neena Savage, State Tax Administrator

*Monday, May 10, 2021 – Revenue Estimate 9:00 A.M. Revenue Estimating Conference*

**This Week At the State House**

Wednesday is a big voting and hearing day.

**Minimum Wage**

The House Labor Committee is set to vote on a minimum wage bill that is expected to be amended to match the Senate version passed back in February. H.5130 SubA, if passed by the committee and then the full House, will increase the minimum wage to $12.25 per hour starting January 1, 2022; $13 per hour January 1, 2023; $14 per hour January 1, 2024; and $15 per hour January 1, 2025. The original bill called for the increase to begin July 1, 2021. The Chamber opposed an increase in minimum wage, but also advocated for changing the implementation date to January if the legislature was to move forward on the proposal.

**Plastic Bags and Plastic Straws**

The Senate Environment and Agriculture Committee is scheduled to vote to ban the use of plastic bags (S.37) and plastic straws (S.155). The Senate passed both of these bills in prior years.

S.37 bans retail establishments from providing plastic bags to customers unless those bags have handles which are stitched and are “specifically designed and manufactured for 125 or more reuses, and is made primarily of washable cloth, other durable woven or nonwoven fabric, polyester, polypropylene, or other durable plastic with a minimum thickness of four (4.0) mils.” There are some exemptions such as bags used for perishable foods, newspapers and door hangers. See [S0037.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0037.pdf) for the exact language

S.155 bans establishments from providing single-use plastic straws to customers unless that customer specifically requests one. [S0155.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0155.pdf)

**TDI/TCI, Family Leave and Medical Leave**

The Senate Labor Committee will take testimony on a few human resource related bills, Wednesday, April 28th at 3:00 p.m. **If you wish to submit written testimony on any of these bills email the testimony to** [**slegislation@rilegislature.gov**](mailto:slegislation@rilegislature.gov) **by 1:59 PM Wednesday, April 28th. Requests to testify verbally must be submitted before 4:00 PM Tuesday (TODAY).** Members of the public can request to provide verbal testimony to the committee through the following link: [VERBAL TESTIMONY](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=LBHmn1akN0aJ3A8oTO_8ZrrkHo3ATJRAp4ByeeV8cWRUM1JIM1NRNElHRFNFN0dFTEFMODNHWjFVUy4u)

S.436, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Temporary Disability Insurance – General Provisions, increases the number of caregiver benefit weeks from four weeks to twelve weeks beginning January 1, 2022. The bill expands the coverage to care for a sibling or grandchild, and includes routine, preventative, diagnostic and therapeutic care as eligible reasons for TDI/TCI coverage. S.436 allows self-employed individuals to join TDI/TCI, and they become eligible after making four quarterly payments into the system, or earlier, if the person was paying into the system prior to becoming self-employed. The bill changes the taxable wage base to the greater of $250,000 or a calculation using the maximum weekly benefit amount multiplied by 30 and divided by (.36). Lastly, the bill creates tiers of weekly benefits paid to lower income individuals. Minimum wage workers will receive 90% of the individual’s weekly wage. Those making two times minimum wage will receive 75% of the individual’s weekly wage. These new rates do not include dependent allowances, although no one is permitted to receive more than 100% of the weekly wage. The bill can be viewed at: [S0436.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0436.pdf)

S.611, 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 13 weeks to 26 weeks in any two calendar years. The bill would take effect upon passage. The bill can be viewed at: [S0611.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0611.pdf)

S.612, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations, Healthy and Safe Families and Workplaces Act, would require an employer to provide employees with additional paid sick leave time, in addition to the current paid sick and safe leave time, for COVID-19 purposes. For employees who work 40 hours or more per week, an employer would be required to provide them with an additional 80 hours of paid sick leave time. For employees who work fewer than 40 hours per week, an employer would be required to provide them with paid sick leave time equal to an average of the number of hours they work over a two-week period. If an employee’s hours vary, the employer is required to use one of the following two options: (1) a number equal to the average number of hours that the employee was scheduled per day over the six month period ending on the date on which the employee takes the paid sick leave time, including hours for which the employee took leave of any type; or (2) If the employee did not work over such period, the reasonable expectation of the employee at the time of hiring of the average number of hours per day that the employee would normally be scheduled to work. This act would take effect upon passage. The bill can be viewed at: [S0612.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0612.pdf)

The following new bills have been filed:

Senate Bill No. [826](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0826.pdf) (Secretary of State) Lombardi, Coyne**,**AN ACT RELATING TO CORPORATIONS, ASSOCIATIONS, AND PARTNERSHIPS -- UNIFORM LIMITED PARTNERSHIP ACT (Enacts the Rhode Island Limited Partnership Act to govern the law of limited partnerships in this state and repeal chapter 12 of title 7 entitled "Limited Partnerships". Effective 1/1/2022.) [S0826.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0826.pdf)

Senate Bill No. [833](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0833.pdf) (Dept. of Transportation) Lombardo, Lombardi**,**AN ACT RELATING TO MOTOR AND OTHER VEHICLES -- SIZE, WEIGHT, AND LOAD LIMITS (Transfers all responsibility for oversize/overweight permitting to the department of transportation and amends and increases fines for all oversize and overweight infractions.) [S0833.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0833.pdf)

Senate Bill No. [836](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0836.pdf) (Secretary of State) Picard**,**AN ACT RELATING TO CORPORATIONS, ASSOCIATIONS, AND PARTNERSHIPS -- MERGER AND CONSOLIDATION (Amends the Rhode Island Nonprofit Corporation Act regarding consolidation and merger.) [S0836.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0836.pdf)

Senate Bill No. [837](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0837.pdf) Pearson, Seveney, Acosta, Goldin, Miller**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- TEMPORARY DISABILITY INSURANCE -- CONTRIBUTIONS (Decreases an employee’s obligation for contribution from wages and require an employer to contribute one-half of the amount to an employee’s contribution.) [S0837.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0837.pdf)

Senate Bill No. [838](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0838.pdf) Lombardi, Lombardo, Picard, Lawson, Ciccone, Gallo, Felag**,**AN ACT RELATING TO CRIMINAL OFFENSES -- GAMES OF CHANCE -- FILING REQUIREMENTS (Removes the requirement, that retail businesses that promote themselves using games of chance, have to register those games of chance with the secretary of state and pay a one hundred fifty dollar ($150) filing fee.) [S0838.pdf (state.ri.us)](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText21/SenateText21/S0838.pdf)