**State House Activity**

The legislature cancelled all sessions and committee hearings for the week April 27 - May 1.

The House Speaker and the Senate President created a Joint Legislative Task Force on COVID-19 Emergency Spending. There are ten members on the joint committee. The first meeting will be held April 30th. Details surrounding where and how this meeting will be posted on the legislative website <http://www.rilegislature.gov/pages/legislation.aspx>

**Revenue Estimating Conference Begins Work**

The Revenue Estimating Conference (REC) began its work Friday April 24th with the Caseload estimates. This REC committee is comprised of the House Fiscal Staff, the Senate Fiscal Staff and the Department of Revenue Staff. This group is charged with taking a deep dive into the state caseload numbers, and the revenues collected or to be collected. The schedule is listed below. The end goal is to reach a consensus on the surplus or deficit for the current fiscal year as well as the revenue that will be considered available for the FY2021 budget

The remainder of the REC meetings will take place as follows and are broadcast on CapitolTV via Cox Channels 15 and 61, in high definition on Cox Channel 1013, on Full Channel on Channel 15 and on Channel 34 by Verizon subscribers. It will also be live streamed at [www.rilegislature.gov/CapTV](http://www.rilegislature.gov/CapTV)

**Wednesday, April 29, 2020 – Economic Overview and Testimony**

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

RI Labor Market Conditions-Department of Labor and Training Donna Murray, Assistance Director, Labor Market Information Unit

Consensus Economic Forecast

10:30 A.M. Unclaimed Property - Office of the General Treasurer

Historic Structures Tax Credits - Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission Motion Picture Production Tax Credits - RI Film and Television Office

Commerce Corporation Tax Credits, Commerce Corporation Lottery Receipts - Department of Revenue, Division of Lottery

**Friday, May 1, 2020 – Follow-up Testimony**

9:00 AM Cash Assistance and Medical Caseloads – Department of Human Services and Executive Office of Health and Human Services

**Monday, May 4, 2020 - Testimony**

2:30 P.M. Tax Collections – Department of Revenue, Division of Taxation Neena Savage, State Tax Administrator

Accruals – Accounts and Controls Peter Keenan, State Controller

**Tuesday, May 5, 2020 – Caseload Estimate**

9:00 A.M. Caseload Estimating Conference

**Wednesday, May 6, 2020 – Follow-up Testimony (if needed)**

11:00 A.M Tax Collections – Department of Revenue, Division of Taxation Neena Savage, State Tax Administrator

**Friday, May 8, 2020 – Revenue Estimate**

9:00 A.M. Revenue Estimating Conference – this should be the final meeting where the final numbers will be adopted

**RI Works Caseload Update**

Testimony surrounding the Rhode Island Works (RIW) was provided at the REC meeting Friday. The RI Works program supports adult family members to work by offering the following benefits and services:

* Cash assistance to certain needy families that qualify
* Comprehensive Assessment and Service Planning for families receiving cash assistance
* Child Care Assistance when needed
* Assistance with Job Training, Adult Education and finding work
* Food Assistance under the SNAP program
* Transportation Assistance through reimbursements or bus passes
* Parents are encouraged to apply for health care while on RI Works

As would be expected, the COVID19 pandemic has affected the RI Works program in a number of ways. The Governor’s budget did assume a 2% increase in the program caseload for FY2021. The state saw a 30% increase in RIW applications for March, 2020, and early April 2020. Due to the pandemic, a number of current RIW participants have been furloughed or laid off, thus making them available for unemployment benefits which may temporarily kick them out of the RIW program. Additionally, other parents, who do not qualify for other benefits like unemployment benefits are expected to apply for RIW program. The state is holding open certain cases so that parents can continue to receive essential benefits during the pandemic. With a stay-at-home order, RIW program participants, can’t go to training classes, or obtain jobs, or they may go beyond the 48 month time limit for the program. The Department expects the cost of keeping these certain cases open through the pandemic to cost $40,000.00.

For a more in depth look at the Rhode Island Works program testimony provided at the Revenue Estimating Conference, go to: <http://www.rilegislature.gov/April%2028%202020%202020%20CCREC/DHS%20May%202020%20Caseload%20Document.pdf\>