**An Update from the State House**

Last week, the Senate Labor Committee, after taking testimony on a number of business-related bills, held those bills for further study. This simply means that the bills remain alive. S.373. allows employees who are covered by an employer sponsored disability insurance program to elect to be exempt from the state temporary disability insurance program. S.615 bars employers from refusing to hire, discharge, or “otherwise discriminate” against a person with respect to any terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, because of his or her status as a medical marijuana cardholder - including because of a positive drug test for marijuana at the workplace or during the hours of employment. S.835 makes it an unlawful employment practice for any person, whether or not an employer, employment agency, labor organization, or employee, “to directly or indirectly commit any act declared by this section to be an unlawful employment practice” (the quoted language would be new law). Additionally the legislation allows individual employees to be held liable for their actions with fellow employees.

**This Week at the State House**

As of last Sunday, the hearing schedule for the House and Senate was very light, which could mean that both sides are discussing which bills are on the favored and disfavored lists. To date only two hearings are noteworthy.

The House Finance Committee is meeting Tuesday at the Rise, approximately 4:30 p.m., to allow the fiscal staff to provide a budget status briefing. The briefing will take place in Room 35.

On the same day, Senate Finance will be meeting at the Rise in Room 211. S.134, An Act Relating to Taxation, would correct what some believe was an oversight a few years ago when income tax reform was adopted. Under current law, a non-resident seller of real estate must have 9% of the sales price held by the closing attorney until such time as the individual’s personal income tax is paid in April. That made sense when the highest tax bracket was 9%; but since it has been lowered to 7%, it makes sense to lower the non-resident withholding amount as well. S.669, An Act Relating to Taxation – Real Estate Conveyance, will also be heard in committee. It allows the City of Newport to institute a 2% real estate transfer tax on the buyer of property.

The following bill was filed last week:

House Bill No. [6117](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/HouseText19/H6117.pdf) Costantino, Hawkins**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS - MINIMUM WAGES (Exempts full-time college students employed by the college or university they attend from the requirement of a three (3) hour work shift guarantee by the employer.)