**This Week at the State House**

Voting is happening at a faster pace as we head into what could be the final month of legislative session.

The Senate Commerce Committee will be voting on the two bills of interest Tuesday at the Rise. Senate Resolution 194 calls for a 22 member commission to study the state’s electric and natural gas distribution infrastructure. The commission must report back to the legislature by March 1, 2020 with its findings. S.253 addresses businesses covered under the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act (WARN Act). The Department of Labor and Training, upon notification that a covered business is going to close, would be required to notify employees of their ability to place a bid to purchase the closing business and to assist with creating a workers’ cooperative should employees wish to buy the business.

The Senate Judiciary Committee will be taking testimony on Tuesday concerning S.598, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Fair Employment Practices. The bill forbids an employer from requiring an employee to execute a nondisclosure agreement or a non-disparagement agreement regarding alleged violations of civil rights or criminal conduct as a condition of employment. This would greatly reduce the ability to enter into settlement agreements with employees to resolve conflicts.

Senate Labor has scheduled a hearing for Wednesday at the Rise in the Senate Lounge. One of the bills being heard is S.172, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Equal Pay Data Collection and Reporting. The bill requires employers with 100 employees or more to file an annual report with the Department of Labor and Training providing compensation information broken down by age, gender, race, ethnicity, job category and occupation title.

The Senate Education Committee plans to vote on the education package introduced on May 8th. This Wednesday, the committee will vote on: S.863 which requires the commissioner of education to develop statewide academic standards and curriculum frameworks for the core subjects of mathematics, English language arts, science and technology, history and social studies, world languages, and the arts; S.864 a bill that directs the council on elementary and secondary education to provide professional support and assistance to local education agencies; S.865 expands the duties of principals over school personnel, facilities and budgets; and S.866 which establishes testing requirements for initial certification of new teachers starting July 1, 2021.

The Senate Environment and Agriculture Committee is set to vote on a plastic bag ban bill and a plastic straw bill. S.410 was created by a stakeholder group comprised of business and environmental representatives. The Governor brought both sides together to work out a compromise which is reflected in S.410. The bill bans retailers from providing single-use plastic bags and requires them to charge a customer five cents for a paper bag should the customer require a bag. A few exceptions exist such as the very important restaurant wine bottle take-home bag. Every retailer is under the same rules which should help with compliance issues. If passed, the bill would go into effect one year from the date of enactment. S.202 SubA will ban facilities from giving out straws unless the customer requests one, or if the customer selects one from a dispenser.

The following bill was filed last week:

House Bill No. [6126](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/HouseText19/H6126.pdf) Bennett, Canario, Noret, Vella-Wilkinson, Jacquard**,**AN ACT RELATING TO FOOD AND DRUGS -- DISPOSABLE FOOD SERVICE CONTAINERS (Prohibits a covered establishment from preparing, selling, processing or providing food or beverages in or on a disposable food service container that is composed in whole or in part of polystyrene foam.)

House Bill No. [6134](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/HouseText19/H6134.pdf) Williams, Fellela, Alzate, Millea, McKiernan**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS - WORKERS' COMPENSATION (Provides employer pays any excess damages for an injured minor/clarifies liability of employer for violation of continuation of health care benefits for injured employee caused by employer/repeals obsolete/inapplicable workers' compensation laws.)

House Resolution No. [6135](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/HouseText19/H6135.pdf) Shanley**,**HOUSE RESOLUTION REINSTATING THE LIFE OF AND EXTENDING THE REPORTING AND EXPIRATION DATES OF THE SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION KNOWN AS THE "RHODE ISLAND ONLINE DATA TRANSPARENCY AND PRIVACY PROTECTION COMMISSION" (Reinstates the life and extends the reporting and expiration dates of the "Rhode Island Online Data Transparency and Privacy Protection Commission" from February 5, 2019, to February 5, 2020, and would expire on May 5, 2020.)

Senate Bill No. [888](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/SenateText19/S0888.pdf) Ciccone, Lombardo, Lombardi**,**AN ACT RELATING TO FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS - SMALL LOAN LENDERS (Allows small loan lenders to charge fees on loans up to $5,000 provided the fees are disclosed and agreed to in written instrument signed by borrower and licensee.)

Senate Bill No. [889](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/SenateText19/S0889.pdf)  Conley, Gallo, Seveney, Lombardi, Felag**,**AN ACT RELATING TO COMMERCIAL LAW - GENERAL REGULATORY PROVISIONS - DECEPTIVE TRADE PRACTICES (Requires retail establishments to accept cash in payment for goods and services excluding online purchases.)

Senate Bill No. [891](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/SenateText19/S0891.pdf) Sosnowski, Euer, Coyne, Valverde, Conley**,**AN ACT RELATING TO MOTOR AND OTHER VEHICLES - IDLING (Removes the word diesel in regard to idling of engines and would pertain to idling of all engines.)

Senate Bill No. [908](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/SenateText19/S0908.pdf) Lawson, Ciccone, Metts, Lombardi, Quezada**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- ESTABLISHING THE "COMMUTER TRANSPORTATION BENEFITS ACT" (Establishes the commuter transportation benefit act. Employers with twenty (20) or more employees would provide a pre-tax transportation fringe benefit program or provide transportation to the employees.)

Senate Bill No. [909](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/SenateText19/S0909.pdf) Ciccone, Lombardo, Gallo, Lombardi, Nesselbush**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS - WORKERS' COMPENSATION (Provides employer pays any excess damages for an injured minor/clarifies liability of employer for violation of continuation of health care benefits for injured employee caused by employer/repeals obsolete/inapplicable workers' compensation laws.)

Senate Bill No. [910](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText19/SenateText19/S0910.pdf) Pearson, McCaffrey, Goodwin, Gallo**,**AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- EMPLOYMENT SECURITY--BENEFITS (Eliminates requirement to pay attorney fees from employment security (unemployment) administrative fund.)