



March Highlights

In Rhode Island, the Governor has submitted the budget. As with everything else in these COVID-19 related times, the Governor's budget is different this year. The budget is much smaller and contains less programmatic initiatives. However, keep in mind that this budget was developed in a noticeably short time frame, and was submitted prior to the federal government passing a stimulus package that provides assistance to state and local governments. That said, it does lay out a basis for the start of the budget discussion.

National Legislation saw success as President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan. The package sends millions of Americans \$1,400 stimulus checks, extends unemployment insurance and provides additional feeding assistance benefits.

National Legislative Updates At A Glance:

- President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan into law Thursday following the House passage of the bill on Wednesday. Highlighted below are of the provisions of interest to our industry.

- Increases the amount states can provide in cash value vouchers (CVV) to WIC participants.
- The bill also provides an additional \$390 million in funding for WIC program modernization.
- The bill also extends P-EBT authorization beyond the 2020-2021 school year to anytime there is a federal health emergency declaration.
- Extends the 15% increase in SNAP benefits through the end of fiscal year 2021.
- Creates a program to provide funds to shore up the most critically endangered multiemployer plans for 30 years.
- The bill also provides some temporary relief for plans that suffered financial setbacks due to the COVID pandemic that should help keep them at their current funding status.
- The legislation includes \$7.5 billion directed towards the CDC to boost vaccine distribution, administration, tracking and promotion
- The bill also allocates \$47 billion to HHS to detect, diagnose, trace, and monitor COVID-19 infections, and for other activities necessary to mitigate the spread of COVID-19
- On Tuesday, the House passed the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act (H.R. 842) by a 225 – 206 vote. The legislation represents the broadest expansion of organized labor rights in over 50 years.
- This week, Democrats in both chambers unveiled separate plans that tackle just some of their key infrastructure priorities

[Click here to learn more about National Legislation.](#)

RI Legislative Updates At A Glance:

- **House Hearings of Note:**
 - H.5261, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Fair Employment Practices, requires employers to adhere to equal pay for “comparable” work.
 - H.5584, An Act Related to Labor and Labor Relations – Unlawful Employment Practices, bars employers from asking potential employees for salary history before an offer of employment has been negotiated.
 - H.5718, and H.5853 Acts Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Fair Employment Practices, forbid an employer to require an employee, as a condition of employment, to execute a nondisclosure agreement or an agreement with a clause that requires alleged violations of civil rights remain confidential, or a non-disparagement agreement concerning alleged violations of civil rights or alleged unlawful conduct.
 - H.5852, An Act Relating to Labor and Labor Relations – Fair Employment Practices, prohibits an employer, from directly or indirectly committing any act declared to be an unlawful employment practice.
- **Make a Note - Bills Filed Last Week!**
 - House Bill No. 6090, AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS - - TEMPORARY DISABILITY INSURANCE -- BENEFITS
 - House Bill No. 6119, AN ACT RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- SMALL BUSINESSES--ZONING ORDINANCES
 - State Budget: House Bill No. 6122, AN ACT MAKING APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE SUPPORT OF THE STATE FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2022
 - Senate Bill No. 568, AN ACT RELATING TO FOOD AND DRUGS -- CANNABIS AUTHORIZATION, REGULATION AND TAXATION
 - Senate Bill No. 605, AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -

THE FAIR CHANCE EMPLOYMENT ACT

- Senate Bill No. 610 , AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- MINIMUM WAGES
- Senate Bill No. 611, AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS - - RHODE ISLAND PARENTAL AND FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE ACT
- Senate Bill No. 612, AN ACT RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS - - HEALTHY AND SAFE FAMILIES AND WORKPLACES ACT

[Click here to learn more about Rhode Island Legislation.](#)

COVID-19 Information Hub: Everything your business needs to know.

American Rescue Plan Act Signed Into Law

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which is the latest bill to address the ongoing economic impacts of COVID-19, has been signed into law. Most aspects of the law does not directly affect the HR function, but those that do include: optional extension of sick and family leave and establishment of COBRA subsidies. To learn more, visit [ThinkHR](#).



Image Source: hilbgroupne.com

Employee Retention Credit Available for Businesses Financially Impacted by COVID-19

The Employee Retention Credit (ERC) was introduced in March 2020 by the CARES Act. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (CAA) both retroactively modified the original ERC and introduced a new ERC effective January 1, 2021. The CAA changes increase the amount of relief available and the types of eligible businesses.

While these changes present greater benefits to more employers, it's important to remember that we still have no formal IRS guidance in this area. Tax planning involving these provisions should be done with caution and in consultation with your tax preparer.



Image Source: hilbgroupne.com

COVID-19 Vaccine Considerations for Employers

Now that COVID-19 vaccinations are becoming more readily available across the country, employers are considering how to move forward with developing a vaccine game plan for their business and employees. While the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has granted Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for the Moderna and Pfizer vaccinations, indicating they are safe for use, many employees are hesitant to be vaccinated when they are eligible to receive them. This leaves employers asking what they can do to ensure safety in the workplace while addressing the fears and concerns of their employees.

To read more, visit [Practice Pointers](#).

Did you know the American Rescue Plan Contains Employment Related Provisions?

The law not only provides financial relief, it contains the following measures of interest to employers and employees:

- A subsidy for COBRA premiums, funded through employer tax credits
- Extension of employer tax credits for FFCRA employee leave voluntarily provided through SEPteMBER, 30 2021
- Expansion of employee earnings eligible for the FFCRA tax credit
- INclusion and immunization as reason for FFCRA leave
- ExentSION of \$300 increase in weekly unemployment benefits
- Expansion of subsidy for ACA premiums
- Increase in DCAP contribution limits
- Extension and expansion of the employee retention tax credit

Download more information [here](#)!



Image Source: [SBA](#)

Small Business Association Feature

Are you in need of a business loan? SBA has everything you need to know!



Securing financing for your business start-up or expansion can be a time-consuming and frustrating endeavor. There are, however, several things you can do to expedite the loan application process *before* you fill out an application:

1. HAVE A GOOD BUSINESS PLAN
2. PROVIDE TAX RETURNS
3. CHECK YOUR CREDIT REPORT
4. BE PREPARED TO CONTRIBUTE
5. COMPLETE THE APPLICATION FULLY

To learn more about business loans, visit www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans.

News Highlight

CPGs Assert Need to Protect Stressed Supply Chains

Following the pandemic's exposure of major cracks in the nation's supply chains, the Consumer Brands Association (CBA) and the Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals (CSCMP), together with researchers from Iowa State University, have issued a report offering policy recommendations to bolster private-sector supply chains. The study calls for the establishment of a national Office of Supply Chain to provide expertise, facilitate coordination across the federal government and encourage collaboration with the private sector. Read the article on, progressivegrocer.com.



Image Source: [Progressive Grocer](#)

Mark Your Calendar

Be Aware, Be Prepared: Prevent Workplace Violence 3-Part Series



Protective
Advanced
Safety
Services

Concerns about health, trust, finances, children, family and the uncertainty of what will happen are contributing to serious behavioral health issues in the workforce. This three-part series facilitated by Protective Advanced Safety Services (PASS) will sharpen your awareness and focus the lens you use to evaluate signals of potential workplace flare-ups that could lead to violence. Throughout the three sessions in this series, you'll gain useful de-escalation skills and techniques for minimizing safety risks before they start.

Apr 28 | Who's Coming to Work | The New Psychology of Your Workplace
May 26 | CALM | De-escalation Techniques to Create a SAFE Workplace
Jun 30 | Hire Right, Fire Smart

All Three Sessions Run from 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm to learn more [click here!](#)

Front House Training Course

The Front of House function for food and retail establishments is changing. Learn the necessary skills to be successful in today's environment with a Real Food Jobs RI training course. This free, virtual self-paced course covers customer service, COVID-19 safety and point of sale. [Enroll here!](#)

Coming Soon - Meetings & Annual Events

April 2021:

- Wed. - April 7th: Legislative Committee Meeting @ 8 AM
- Thurs. – Fri. April 15th & 16th: 2021 Convention Sponsorship Program Sent ??
- Thurs. April 15th @ 9:30 AM: Potential WIC/SNAP Meeting??
- Mon. – Tues. April 19th & 20th: 2020 Convention Invitations Sent
- Thurs. April 22nd: Executive Committee Meeting @ 7:30

May 2021:

- Wed. May 5th: BOD 2nd Quarter Meeting (@ TBD)
- Wed. May 12th Legislative Committee Meeting (Bill Tracking – Hearings) ??
- Mon. May 31st: Office Closed Memorial Day Holiday

June 2021:

- Thurs. June 3rd – Sun., June 6th RIFDA Annual Convention; @ TBD – TENTATIVE
- Thurs. June 10th @ 7:30 AM: Executive Committee Meeting
- Wed. June 23rd Legislative Committee Meeting



Thank you to our March
Supplier of the Month - Polar



Thank you to our March
Retailer of the Month - Shaw's



If you are a Satisfied Member, Spread
the Word, Tell Your Industry Friends &
Vendors.

As a member, the benefit advantages such as our food safety renewal classes, WIC/EBT updates, legislative representation and updates, national industry affiliations and updates, networking events, energy programs and food industry camaraderie, as well as a number of other initiatives make RIFDA a great opportunity for new members.

Throughout each year there are exciting events as well as sponsorship and advertising opportunities. It is members like yourselves that make this all happen.

With new memberships RIFDA moves into the future as a stronger and more vibrant representative of the Rhode Island food community.

Learn
More



Save the Date:
RIFDA Annual Convention
Thurs. June 3rd – Sun., June 6th

Call: (401) 431-0880 | Fax: (401) 434-2496 | Email: events@rifda.com or sarthurs@rifda.com |
Visit: www.rifda.com