



# Rhode Island Senate Session Report



146th Session

 @risenate

2019

 @RISenate







Dear Rhode Islanders,

The 2019 General Assembly Session drew unprecedented civic engagement to the legislative process. For six months, my colleagues and I worked diligently to improve the lives of Rhode Islanders, and I am pleased to present our annual Senate Session Report that highlights our recent legislative accomplishments.

The Senate began the year by unveiling “Building a More Vibrant Rhode Island.” This legislative package included more than a dozen proposals designed to spur economic development, such as streamlining municipal permitting, training our workforce, and helping small businesses grow. Some measures have become law, while others are works in progress. We recognize that transforming Rhode Island’s approach to economic development and embracing growth will take time.

This session, under the guidance of our Education Committee chairwoman and its members, the Senate also enacted significant education reform. A strong economy begins with high-quality public education, and Rhode Island’s education system needs to be overhauled. We were proud to have stood together with our House counterparts in the State House Library to introduce our Education Reform Act. The Senate believes all students, regardless of where they live, should be given equal opportunities to learn how to develop new ideas, tackle large societal problems, and lead our communities with integrity. We worked throughout this session to establish building-level management in our schools and high-quality curriculum in school districts throughout Rhode Island. We will continue to listen to educational leaders, teachers, parents, and students as we work to create the best education system we can.

This report details additional Senate initiatives, including our sustained efforts to fight the opioid epidemic; end elder abuse and financial exploitation; ensure good government initiatives; emphasize quality health care; and prioritize fiscal responsibility as we implement our state priorities.

In conclusion, I want to thank the Senate and its staff for their work this session. I am fortunate to have colleagues who are deeply committed to public service, to understanding their constituents’ needs, and to pooling their individual talents to build a more vibrant Rhode Island. I know we all hope this report inspires the public to engage with us, and we look forward to collaborating with you in the years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dominick J. Ruggerio". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Dominick J. Ruggerio  
President of the Senate

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# Rhode Island Senate

prioritizes

## Building a More Vibrant Rhode Island



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# Building a More Vibrant Rhode Island



*Senators and community leaders discuss  
Building a More Vibrant Rhode Island at policy roundtable for the public*

The Rhode Island Senate embarked this year on a thoughtful, multi-year initiative to improve the state's economy. The effort is called "Building a More Vibrant Rhode Island."

In order for the economy to flourish, Rhode Islanders need high-quality education; fewer barriers to development and small-business creation; sustained workforce training; a variety of housing options; and a strong focus on Rhode Island's core industries and businesses.

To address these needs, the Senate developed a robust legislative package, which included 15 bills and five research topics. Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio introduced the initiative during a roundtable discussion for Senators and business and community leaders. He emphasized that the legislation would

**“** *We look forward to working collaboratively with the folks in this room — with business, with labor, with cities and towns, and with the public — to build a more vibrant Rhode Island.*

**Senate President  
Dominick J. Ruggerio**

remove some impediments to development and is intended to ensure that Rhode Island is a place where residents can thrive, where companies want to remain, and where new companies may seek to relocate from elsewhere.

A number of the initiatives passed both chambers and have become law. The Senate also committed to continue researching housing, apprenticeships, the state's fisheries industry, and the impact that insurer payments to health care providers have on Rhode Islanders' access to health care.

The work continues into next year. Senators already anticipate revising legislation from the 2019 package that has not yet become law and drafting new legislation to address additional economic development priorities for Rhode Island.

# Encouraging More Development

## State Budget, Article 12, Fiscal Year 2020

## Streamlining development approvals for large tracts of state-owned land

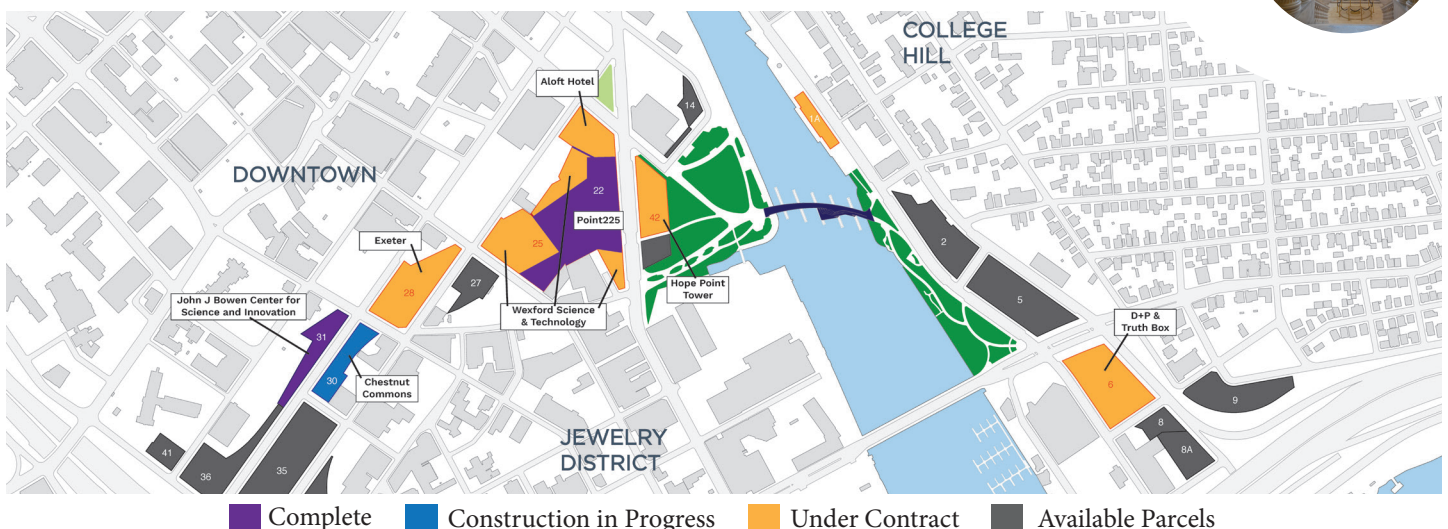
- 1 The state budget authorizes the creation of Special Economic Development Districts on state-owned tracts of 20 or more contiguous acres not owned or controlled by the Department of Environmental Management.
- 2 The special districts are vested with the authority to adopt development plans that include land use, location of buildings, street systems, dimension and height requirements, parking, landscaping, design review, and population density.
- 3 The I-195 Redevelopment District Commission, which is charged with developing 26 acres in Providence, is granted the same authority as any new districts. Any other districts would need General Assembly approval.
- 4 Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio was instrumental in creating the I-195 District and Commission in 2011. He began working on legislation regarding Special Economic Development Districts because of concerns about delays and impediments to the Hope Point Tower project proposed for the I-195 land.

“ In the I-195 District, a developer is hoping to invest more than a quarter of a billion dollars to create an iconic structure that redefines the skyline. We should have welcomed this investment with open arms.”

**Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio**

## STATUS

## Signed Into Law



SOURCE: I-195 Redevelopment District Commission

## Senate Bill No. 687 Substitute A

### Speeding up building inspections

- 1 This law requires local building officials to conduct inspections within 48 hours after receiving an inspection request. If they do not, contractors or builders may hire qualified, third-party inspectors or state inspectors.
- 2 This law addresses concerns from citizens, business owners, and developers that some cities and towns don't move at the speed of business.
- 3 Cities and towns must reimburse the state for salary and operating expenses when state inspectors do the work.
- 4 Local building officials are required to accept such third-party inspection reports.



**STATUS**

**Signed Into Law**



## Senate Bill No. 688

### Authorizing qualified inspectors to sign permits

- 1 This law authorizes building, electrical, mechanical, and plumbing inspectors to sign respective permits for areas they're qualified to inspect.
- 2 The intent is to speed up the permitting process by reducing the lag time between inspection and permit approval.

**STATUS**

**Signed Into Law**





# Assistance for Small Businesses

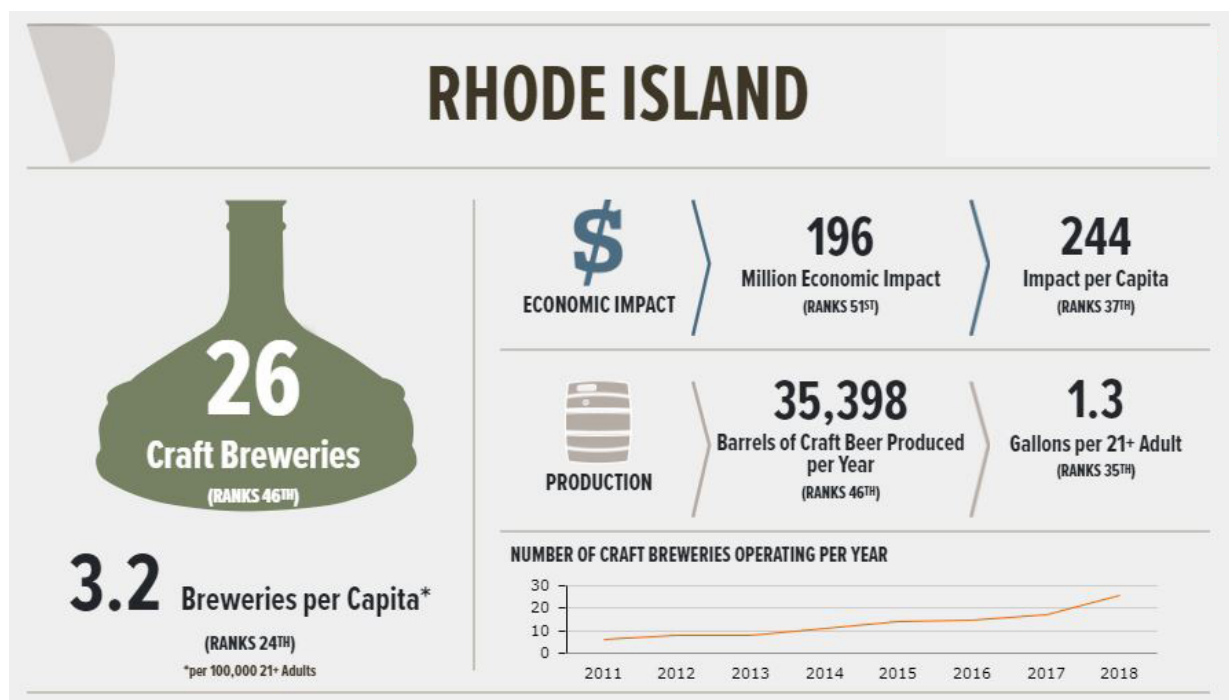
## Senate Bill No. 620

## Helping craft breweries grow

- 1 This law raises craft beer limits for sale so the brewing industry may continue to grow.
- 2 It allows breweries to sell a full case of 24 beers at the establishment, regardless of whether the brewery produces 12-ounce or 16-ounce cans or bottles.
- 3 Since many of Rhode Island's craft breweries produce 16-ounce containers, this increases the limits of what they can sell on premises to consumers for off-premises consumption.
- 4 The Senate worked to allow additional growth in an industry that has recently expanded from 14 to 30 craft breweries — growth that may be attributed to an earlier law that had increased limits on sales.

## STATUS

## Signed Into Law



SOURCE: [Brewers Association](#)

## State Budget, Article 12, Fiscal Year 2020

## Creating new ways to invest capital in growing companies

- 1 This initiative allows investment companies to raise Small Business Development Funds, of no more than \$20 million per fund, and then to invest the money in small businesses based in Rhode Island.
- 2 Those investors who raise the funds then earn state tax credits.
- 3 The Rhode Island Commerce Corporation is permitted to authorize up to \$65 million worth of total funds for this program. This idea began as legislation – [Senate Bill No. 55](#) – and was later worked into the state budget for Fiscal Year 2020.
- 4 The program is targeted toward industries identified as showing potential for growth.
- 5 Identified in a 2016 study by the Brookings Institution and partners, such industries include: clean energy, biomedical innovation, life sciences, and information technology.

## STATUS

## Signed Into Law



“ It provides for the flow of capital investment into small businesses identified as critical to our state’s future and creates jobs. In fact, an impact assessment demonstrates that for every 100 jobs created in the targeted industries, another 113 indirect and individual jobs are created.”

**Senator William J. Conley Jr.**  
Lead sponsor of original bill

# Developing More Housing Options

## Senate Bill No. 691 Substitute A

## Expanding allowances for Accessory Dwelling Units

- 1 This law increases housing options for people at a time when development and housing creation have not kept pace with demand for housing.
- 2 All family members — not just those who are 62 or who have disabilities — may now build Accessory Dwelling Units in single-family residences.
- 3 The Senate recognizes that many Rhode Island families need housing options that work for them.

## STATUS

## Signed Into Law



### What are Accessory Dwelling Units?

They are living spaces in a house, garage, or barn with a separate kitchen, bathroom, and entryway, which maintain the appearance of a single-family home.

## Senate Resolution No. 1005

## Commission to research R.I.'s housing system


- 1 The Senate has created a 15-member commission to review Rhode Island's housing system and to evaluate concerns that may impede development.
- 2 The Commission will study ways to increase access to safe and affordable housing that meets the needs of a wide range of incomes.
- 3 Initial recommendations and potential legislative proposals are due by January 31, 2020, in time for the 2020 legislative session.

## STATUS

## Resolution Was Enacted







## Why must the Senate study housing needs?

**145,000**  
R.I. households spend  
**more than 30%**  
of their yearly income  
on housing costs

(That's **35%** of all households in R.I.)

**44% of the 145,000**  
spend  
**more than 50%**  
of their yearly income on housing costs

### **Only in Central Falls ...**

Can a household earning a yearly income of up to \$50,000 affordably buy a median-priced home

### **Multifamily building permits,** from 2016 to 2017:

**Decreased** in Rhode Island by 44%;  
**Increased** in Boston by 100%; and  
**Increased** in Connecticut by 89%.

# Senate Task Force on Fisheries

## Recognizing the value of R.I.'s fishing industry

1

Rhode Island's commercial and recreational fishing industry supports not only the vessels and fishers on the water, but also fish-processing facilities, fish markets, ship repair shops, ice houses, marinas, restaurants, and shore-side businesses.

2

In 2016, the 428 firms in Rhode Island's fisheries and seafood sector\* generated:

- 3,147 jobs and
- \$538.3 million of gross sales.

3

Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio has reinvigorated the Senate Task Force on Fisheries to:

- Research industry trends;
- Understand the legal and regulatory mandates imposed on this vital industry;
- Identify challenges within the fishing community; and
- Propose legislative and regulatory responses to barriers the industry faces.

4

Task Force Chairwoman V. Susan Sosnowski served as its original chair in 2010 and currently also serves as Chairwoman of the Senate Committee on Environment & Agriculture.

## The Task Force

Senator V. Susan Sosnowski,  
*Chairwoman*

Senate Majority Leader  
Michael J. McCaffrey

Senate Minority Leader  
Dennis L. Algiere

Senator Louis P. DiPalma

Senator Dawn Euer

Senator Walter S. Felag Jr.

Senator Mark P. McKenney

Senator James C. Sheehan

Senator Bridget G. Valverde

**Watch Capitol TV's**  
*recording of the inaugural meeting of the  
reinvigorated Fisheries Task Force*

Available Online



\* **SOURCE:** "The Economic Impact of Rhode Island's Fisheries and Seafood Sector," URI report

## Rhode Island's commercial fishing industry

2016 economic impact:

- **150 firms**
- **\$88.39 million**  
**in annual gross sales**
- **1,711 jobs**

SOURCE: Data from URI report, "[The Economic Impact of Rhode Island's Fisheries and Seafood Sector](#)"

“ In its previous iteration, this Task Force was effective at addressing barriers and assisting the local fishing industry. Reconstituting the Task Force is a good way to support the industry as they continue to navigate complex regulatory waters.”

**Senator V. Susan Sosnowski**

Chairwoman of the Senate Task Force on Fisheries



As the Senate prioritizes its Fisheries Task Force, the chamber passed **resolutions** throughout the year recognizing the industry's importance to the Ocean State. Highlights include:

1. Rhode Island's hard-working fishers **work tirelessly and skillfully** to attain the food that stocks our stores with fresh seafood and provides our restaurants with the seafood they need to complete their menus.
2. Rhode Island fishers and the communities that rely on a vibrant fishing industry **face numerous challenges in the years ahead**. Fisheries policy and regulation have become increasingly complex.
3. While Rhode Island has strongly embraced the new-to-the-United States offshore wind industry, it is also essential to be vigilant in **protecting and maintaining the state's fishing and seafood industries**.

# Expanding Apprenticeship Opportunities

## Senate Bill No. 713 Substitute A

## Training the next generation of construction workers

- 1 This bill would have required public school construction contracts valued at \$5 million or more to have apprenticeship programs.
- 2 The legislation worked to ensure that complex, expensive school construction projects would be built by properly trained craftspeople.
- 3 As the nation faces widespread labor shortages in the construction industry, this bill sought to help the local industry train people to build the state's necessary infrastructure projects.

## STATUS

## Passed the Senate



“The real point of this is it transforms people's lives. ... We have seen that transformation ourselves. Almost 300 people – 80% diverse, from low-income populations – have moved into registered apprenticeship within the building trades/construction occupations and are now enjoying gainful careers in the middle class ... and they've created that economic upswell that we're looking for within this set of bills.”

**Andrew Cortés**

Executive Director and Founder of Building Futures, speaking at [Building a More Vibrant Rhode Island roundtable](#)

## Senate Resolution No. 711

## State to study expansion of non-trade registered apprenticeships

- 1 Rhode Island has created a robust network of apprenticeship programs beyond the traditional building and construction trades. Jobs now approved for apprenticeship training include community health nurses, alcohol and drug counselors, network engineers, boat builders, and graphic designers.
- 2 Now, the Senate urges the Governor's Workforce Board and the Department of Labor and Training to examine the feasibility of expanding such non-trade registered apprenticeship programs.

## STATUS

## Resolution Was Enacted





# Appendix: Building a More Vibrant Rhode Island

## Senate Bill No. 690

### **Bill would have limited the sharing of municipal building officials**

- This bill addressed concerns from the building community that sharing building officials among Rhode Island cities and towns causes delays for builders seeking timely inspections.
- The bill would have limited the sharing of building officials to two communities.
- Furthermore, municipalities would not have been able to require their local building officials to do non-building code work when pending building code work required attention.

**Status:** Passed the Senate

## Senate Bill No. 726 Substitute A

### **Bill sought to align R.I. apprenticeship laws with federal laws**

- This bill would have ensured that Rhode Island's apprenticeship laws aligned with federal laws and met modern standards.
- Such alignment has been required since the state won federal approval a few years ago to administer apprenticeship programs on behalf of the federal government.
- Rhode Island would have been able to grant "reciprocal recognition" to apprentices who are registered elsewhere, such as in another state or with the federal government, but who come into the state to work. That would have clarified that Rhode Island does not need to re-approve apprentices who have met program requirements for another state or for the federal government.
- The bill also would have clarified the hours of credit that apprentices in certain fields could earn for technical academic instruction in high schools, trade schools, and universities or colleges.

**Status:** Passed the Senate

## Senate Bill No. 653

### **Senators worked to inform children at early ages about apprenticeships**

- This bill would have given K-12 school committees the power to establish policies regarding implementation of career and technical education programs into the curriculum. Typically, such programs include providing students with information about careers, employment, registered apprenticeships, and the advantages of completing school with marketable skills.
- The Senate hoped this would remind schools that it is important for students to know about the many options that exist, since not all students will choose to pursue higher education.

**Status:** Passed the Senate



## Bill sought to support fisheries apprenticeships

- This bill would have expanded the charge to the Governor's Workforce Board to fund apprenticeship programs that would include agriculture, commercial fisheries, and the marine trades.
- This effort sought to address an aging fisheries workforce and to develop the next generation of fishers by encouraging young people to seek work in Rhode Island's growing marine trades sector. The sector includes boat building and repair, marine construction, manufacturing, and supply.

**Status:** Passed the Senate

## Bill would have required a 5-year STEAM strategic plan

- This bill would have required the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop and implement a 5-year plan that focuses on providing K-12 students with additional opportunities in science, technology, engineering, arts, and math education.
- The Department would have needed to set goals for improving student performance, for attracting more students to earn postsecondary degrees in STEAM, and for addressing teacher shortages in these fields.
- This bill recognized the importance of preparing today's students for job opportunities in STEAM fields after they graduate.

**Status:** Held for Further Study

## Senate Commission to study impact of insurer payments on access to health care

- To address concerns that health care providers in Rhode Island may be reimbursed less for their specialized work than those in neighboring Massachusetts and Connecticut, the Senate has created a special Senate Commission to study reimbursement rates.
- The Senate requests this Commission to study health insurance payments for medical, dental, and mental health services to determine if the current payments impact the state's health insurer network adequacy and appropriate access to health care for Rhode Islanders.
- The 15-member Commission shall work with the Senate Finance and Senate Health and Human Services Committees to study this matter and to report findings, recommendations, and potential legislative proposals to the Senate President by January 31, 2020.

**Status:** Resolution Was Enacted

## Senators worked to prohibit housing discrimination based on source of income

- This legislation sought to amend the Rhode Island Fair Housing Practice Act to prohibit landlords from discriminating against individuals based on their source of income.
- Under this bill, a “lawful source of income” would have included Social Security benefits, child support, alimony, and any federal, state, or local public assistance program, such as Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers.
- If this bill had become law, a property owner would not have been able to deny housing to an applicant as long as the person’s source of income was considered “lawful.”

**Status:** Passed the Senate

## Legislation intended to address Block Island housing needs

- This act would have allowed residents of New Shoreham who earn up to 140% of the area median income to qualify for affordable housing.
- As in many communities across Rhode Island, Block Island faces a housing shortage. Due to the high prices on the island, many residents are priced out of the community’s real estate market.
- Currently, individuals must earn an approximate annual income of \$248,000 to afford a home on Block Island. Raising the affordable housing income threshold from 120% to 140% was expected to help additional people afford homes.”

**Status:** Passed the Senate



# In the News

## Building a More Vibrant Rhode Island

### R.I. Senate unveils new effort to bolster the state's economy

The Rhode Island Senate unveiled on Wednesday a multi-faceted two-year effort meant to improve the state's economy.

**Source** The Public's Radio

**Date** March 14, 2019

**Author** Ian Donnis

During a Statehouse media event, Senate President Dominick Ruggerio said the effort was inspired in part by how Rhode Island is expected to lose one of its two congressional seats around the time of the 2022 election.

Speaking broadly, he said the goals of the effort include “removing impediments to development and housing, enhance education and workforce development, incentivize sustainable growth in the solar industry and other areas of alternative energy, and support local industries including seafood, craft beer and small businesses.”

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**Continue Reading:** <https://thepublicsradio.org/article/ri-senate-unveils-new-effort-to-bolster-the-states-economy>

### 20-bill Senate agenda aims to spur housing development in R.I.

PROVIDENCE — Rhode Island Senate leaders want to ease the housing crunch by ending slow building inspections, forcing municipalities to replace residential land lost to solar farms and by taking the “granny” out of Rhode Island’s “granny-flat” law.

**Source** The Providence Journal

**Date** March 13, 2019

**Author** Patrick Anderson

In a 20-bill economic agenda rolled out Wednesday under the banner of “building a more vibrant Rhode Island,” Senate President Dominick Ruggerio, a former high-ranking official in an arm of the Laborers’ International Union of North America, said the Senate hoped its ideas could save the state from losing a congressional seat.

Although the housing theme ran through many of the bills, the package also includes requiring union-oriented apprentice programs in public school construction projects, increasing the quantity of beer local brewers can sell on-site, creating a new tax credit program for investments in local start-up businesses and enacting a “right to fish” law.

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**Continue Reading:** <https://www.providencejournal.com/news/20190313/20-bill-senate-agenda-aims-to-spur-housing-development-in-ri>



# In the News

## Building a More Vibrant Rhode Island

### Rhode Island senators unveil economic development priorities

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) — Rhode Island senators are proposing several bills aimed at developing the state's economy.

The Senate unveiled measures Wednesday that'll be introduced this week and topics being researched for future legislation.

Among their priorities, senators want to update the building inspection process so development can happen quicker, offer more apprenticeships, create more housing opportunities and incentivize growth in the solar energy industry.

The Associated Press article above also ran in the *Miami Herald*, *The Sacramento Bee*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *San Francisco Gate*, and *The Washington Times*.

**Source** U.S. News & World Report

**Date** March 13, 2019

**Author** The Associated Press

Continue Reading: <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/rhode-island/articles/2019-03-13/rhode-island-senators-unveil-economic-development-priorities>

### 'Building a More Vibrant Rhode Island' bills pass Senate

State House – Three bills that are part of the Rhode Island Senate's "Building a More Vibrant Rhode Island" economic development package passed the Senate today. The bills that relate to expanding apprenticeship opportunities were sponsored by Sen. Frank A. Ciccone (D-Dist. 7, Providence, North Providence), Sen. Sandra Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket) and Sen. Cynthia A. Coyne (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence).

The first bill (2019-S 0713A), sponsored by Senator Ciccone, expands state law for public works contracts so that public school construction contracts valued at \$5 million or more shall have apprenticeship programs and that no less than 15 percent of labor hours worked shall be by apprentices.

"With the massive investment in school construction that our state is undertaking, it is imperative that we help train and educate future laborers through apprenticeships on these projects. More apprenticeships means more future well-paying middle class jobs that will strengthen our economy going forward," said Senator Ciccone.

**Source** Reporter Today

**Date** May 15, 2019

**Author** Staff

Continue Reading: <http://www.reportertoday.com/stories/building-a-more-vibrant-rhode-island-bills-pass-senate,26910>



# In the News

## Building a More Vibrant Rhode Island

### State Senate re-establishes task force to support fishermen

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) — A task force to support the fishing industry has been re-established in Rhode Island.

Source

U.S. News & World Report

Date

March 9, 2019

Author

The Associated Press

Democratic state Senate President Dominick Ruggerio said Friday that he re-established the Senate Task Force on Fisheries and Democratic Sen. Susan Sosnowski will lead it.

Sosnowski, of South Kingstown, says the task force in its previous iteration was effective at addressing barriers and assisting the local industry. She says reconstituting it will help support the industry as its members navigate complex regulations.

Continue Reading: <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/rhode-island/articles/2019-03-09/state-senate-re-establishes-task-force-to-support-fishermen>

### Rhode Island Senate approves bill banning housing discrimination

The Rhode Island Senate approved a bill on Wednesday that would prevent landlords from discriminating against prospective tenants with housing vouchers. The bill adds the words “lawful source of income” to the list of factors a landlord cannot use as a basis for a decision, including race, religion, sex, gender identity, color, marital status, sexual orientation and more.

Source

Patch

Date

June 5, 2019

Author

Rachel Nunes

“Lawful source of income” is defined as “income or other assistance derived from Social Security; Supplemental Security Income; any other federal, state or local general public assistance, including medical assistance; any federal, state or local housing assistance, including Section 8 Housing ... , and any other rental assistance; child support; or alimony.”

“It should not be legal to refuse to rent to someone just because they get a housing subsidy. That’s discrimination against the poor and those who, for whatever reason, qualify for assistance,” said the bill’s sponsor, Providence Senator Harold Metts. “It’s a systematic way of keeping poor people out of certain places, and forcing them into certain other places. That’s segregation and it hurts families and our society. We absolutely should have addressed this problem long ago.”

Continue Reading: <https://patch.com/rhode-island/portsmouth/rhode-island-senate-approves-bill-banning-housing-discrimination>





# Press Releases

## Building a More Vibrant Rhode Island

Package of Senate bills

Initiative intended to improve state's economy

Date

March 13, 2019

### Senate unveils package of economic development bills

STATE HOUSE, Providence – Rhode Island Senate leaders hosted a “policy roundtable” today to unveil and discuss a package of bills related to economic development.

Themed around “Building a More Vibrant Rhode Island,” the legislative initiatives propose action in a number of areas, including development, workforce training, housing, education, solar energy, and supporting small businesses and Rhode Island’s seafood industry. The legislation was slated for introduction during the Senate session following the forum.

“These bills help to remove some of the impediments to development that still exist, and they better prepare Rhode Islanders for tomorrow’s economy,” President of the Senate Dominick J. Ruggerio told the participants. “We recognize that many factors need to be addressed in order for residents to thrive here and for companies and their employees to want to live and work here. ...”

Joining the Senate president at the roundtable were members of Senate leadership, including Majority Leader Michael J. McCaffrey, Minority Leader Dennis L. Algiere, and Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin, as well as the chairpersons of the committees likely to be reviewing much of the legislation: Health and Human Services Committee Chairman Joshua Miller, who also chairs the Democratic Policy Caucus; Finance Committee Chairman William J. Conley, Jr.; Special Legislation & Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Walter S. Felag, Jr.; Education Committee Chairwoman Hanna M. Gallo; Housing & Municipal Government Chairman Frank Lombardo, III; and Environment & Agriculture Committee Chairwoman V. Susan Sosnowski.

Roundtable participants also included:

- Kathleen S. Connell, State Director for AARP-Rhode Island;
- Andrew Cortes, Director of Apprenticeship Rhode Island and Executive Director and Founder of Building Futures;
- John Gregory, President and CEO of the Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce;
- John Marcantonio, Executive Director of the Rhode Island Builders Association;
- Cortney Nicolato, President and CEO of the United Way of Rhode Island; and
- Laurie White, President of the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce.

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[Available Online](#)



# Press Releases

## Building a More Vibrant Rhode Island

### Senate Bill No. 803 Substitute A as amended

### Encouraging investment in R.I. development

**Date** June 11, 2019

#### **Senate passes President Ruggerio's bill to streamline development on large tracts of state land, such as I-195 redevelopment area**

STATE HOUSE, Providence – The Senate today passed legislation (2019-S-803Aaa) sponsored by President of the Senate Dominick J. Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) that takes a new approach to economic development on large tracts of state land. Spurred by delays and impediments imposed upon the Hope Point Tower proposal for the I-195 Redevelopment District, the bill intends to create a more streamlined process for approvals on these state-owned parcels moving forward.

“We have a rare opportunity for development at the former I-195 land and some other areas across the state,” said Senator Ruggerio. “In the I-195 District, a developer is hoping to invest more than a quarter of a billion dollars to create an iconic structure that redefines the skyline. We should have welcomed this investment with open arms. Instead, we did everything we could to chase the developer away. Thankfully, he’s still here. This process has sent a terrible message to anyone looking to invest in Rhode Island.”

...

[Available Online](#)

### Senate Bill No. 691 Substitute A

### Developing more housing options

**Date** June 27, 2019

#### **Lawmakers pass legislation allowing homeowners to build accessory dwellings for family members**

STATE HOUSE — The General Assembly has passed legislation introduced by Sen. Frank S. Lombardi (D-Dist. 26, Cranston) and Rep. Evan P. Shanley (D-Dist. 24, Warwick) that would help homeowners to build onto their houses to provide space for relatives.

The bill (2019-S 0691A, 2019-H 6219) would expand the definition of “family member” for purposes of zoning ordinances to include child, parent, spouse, mother-in-law, father-in-law, grandparents, grandchildren, domestic partner, sibling, care recipient, or member of the household. The bill is part of the Senate’s “Building a More Vibrant Rhode Island” package of economic development legislation.

“The existing law allows permitting for family accessory dwelling units, such as in-law apartments, for family members who are elderly or disabled,” said Senator Lombardi. “That law has been very helpful for families that are providing care. This bill expands that, giving a way to stay close to families while addressing the state’s housing affordability issues.”

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[Available Online](#)



# Press Releases

## Building a More Vibrant Rhode Island

### Senate Bill No. 620

### Assistance for small businesses

**Date** July 18, 2019

#### **Senator Felag's bill that raises amount of beer directly sold by breweries to customers signed into law**

STATE HOUSE – Sen. Walter S. Felag's (D-Dist. 10, Warren, Bristol, Tiverton) legislation (2019-S 0620) that would increase the amount of beer sold directly to customers by breweries has been signed into law by the governor.

"Rhode Island's craft brewery industry has been a true bright spot in Rhode Island's resurgence from the Great Recession and this legislation will ensure that this promising and successful industry continues to grow within Rhode Island's borders. This bill will allow our breweries to better compete with those in our surrounding states and continue the growth we have witnessed in a very short amount of time," said Senator Felag.

...

[Available Online](#)







# Rhode Island Senate

endorses

## Education Reform



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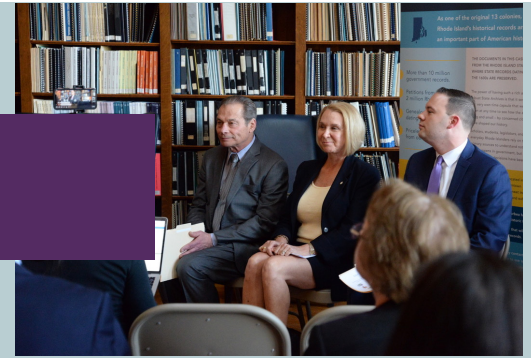


@RISenate





# Education Reform



Legislative leaders announce 2019 Education Reform package

At a time when frustration is mounting about unacceptable academic performance and widening achievement gaps, the Senate recognized that Rhode Island's approach to education needed a systemic transformation.

Our neighbor to the north is ranked best in the nation for education, but disparities exist even there. As a result, the Senate took care to focus on the strengths and learn from the opportunities found in Massachusetts' education system, while also addressing the specific needs of Rhode Islanders.

Education is about more than students and teachers. After all, each of us was once a student, so we know that students become young adults. Young adults need skills to get jobs that allow them to pay rent for Rhode Island apartments, eat in Rhode Island restaurants, and shop in Rhode Island stores. These skills can even help foster a new generation of Rhode Island

“The bills seek to bring about a culture change within our education system so that the talented professionals at the Department of Education can shift from ensuring compliance to assisting schools with on-the-ground – or in the classroom – support. We need educators, not regulators.”

**Senator Hanna M. Gallo**  
Chairwoman of the Senate  
Committee on Education

entrepreneurs. Eventually, we want those young adults to buy Rhode Island houses and send their children to Rhode Island schools – to participate in our economy and build a more vibrant Rhode Island.

The cycle starts with an education, and it must be exceptional. Only an exceptional education will allow our students to compete with their peers across state lines and around the globe; and until we deliver that to everyone, we cannot expect our students to participate in our society the way we envision.

There have been attempts to make meaningful changes before, but this is not just another attempt. We have no intention of this being a

fad. This is a reformation. Our continued success requires everyone to be thoughtful, courageous, and committed to doing the hard work every year. What follows is where we started.

# Preparing Students for Success

## Senate Bill No. 863 Substitute B

## Ensuring high-quality curriculum in every classroom

1

This law requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to publish a menu of options for high-quality curriculum in the core subjects of math and English by January 1, 2021, with options for additional subjects to follow.

2

School districts must select one curriculum for each subject from the menu of options and implement it throughout the district, with help from the Department.

3

The law also creates a different kind of relationship between school districts and the Department – one that is less about compliance and more about teamwork.

4

This new law will make sure that rigorous curriculum is available to everyone.

### Teachers' Criteria for Determining the Quality of Instructional Materials:

Alignment to standards

Rigorous and diverse activities

Complete and user-friendly

Contains support for teachers

Appropriate by skill level, language  
ability, and learning style

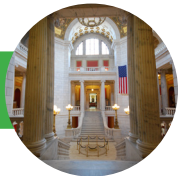
Culturally relevant

Accurate and visually appealing

**SOURCE:** Information from "How teachers judge the quality of instructional materials," a WestEd report

## STATUS

## Signed Into Law



“... [O]ur academic standards set forth the skills, competencies, and knowledge expected of each student. The curriculum will align with those standards, and the frameworks would provide strategies to help meet the diverse needs of our students, closing any gaps that exist.”

**Senator Hanna M. Gallo**  
Lead sponsor of the bill

# Helping Schools Thrive

## Senate Bill No. 865 Substitute A

## Creating school-based governance and promoting accountability

- 1 This law empowers principals by strengthening building-level management of Rhode Island schools. It also increases on-the-ground support for underperforming schools and districts.
- 2 In recognition of students' diverse learning styles, assessments will now include a range of elements, such as work samples, projects, and portfolios.
- 3 This law requires greater collaboration among state, district, and school officials to develop and implement school improvement plans.

**STATUS**

**Signed Into Law**



## Senate Bill No. 869 Substitute A

## Law establishes fast-track principal certification

- 1 This law requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to establish a fast-track program to certify new principals.
- 2 Applicants must have at least 10 years of experience as “effective” or “highly effective” teachers, a recommendation from their superintendent, a record of leadership, and a master’s degree.
- 3 Candidates must take three courses (school finance, school law, and program evaluation); lead a district- or school-wide initiative; shadow a principal in a year-long internship; and pass the principal certification assessment requirements.
- 4 Within the principal’s first certification renewal cycle, he or she must complete a Department-approved leadership development program.



**STATUS**

**Signed Into Law**





# Examining How R.I. Funds Schools

## Senate Resolution No. 1042

### The Task Force

Senator Ryan W. Pearson, *Chairman*

Senator Sandra Cano

Senator Louis P. DiPalma

Senator Harold M. Metts

Senator Melissa A. Murray

Senator Thomas J. Paolino

Senator Gordon E. Rogers

Senator Adam J. Satchell

Senator James A. Seveney

*Ex-Officio Members:*

Senator William J. Conley Jr.

Senator Hanna M. Gallo

## Resolution creates Senate Task Force to Study Rhode Island's Education Funding Formula

- 1 This Task Force will examine the current funding formula and report on whether it meets the needs of students, school districts, and taxpayers by January 2, 2020.
- 2 The assessment will include a review of the core principles of the Education Equity and Property Tax Relief Act, which state, in part, that:
  - All children should have access to a meaningful education, regardless of where they live and
  - The funding system should provide a predictable amount and source of funds, treat property taxpayers equitably, and respond to educational inequities in the state's school districts.
- 3 Currently, state education aid comes in two forms: foundation and categorical. Categorical aid is meant to fund expenses that the rest of the formula does not fully accommodate.

## STATUS

## Resolution Was Enacted



## Categorical Funds Include Expenses for:



Career and Technical Education



English Learners



High-Cost Special Education



Early Childhood Programs

# Ensuring Greater Autonomy for URI

## State Budget, Article 9, Fiscal Year 2020



## University of Rhode Island gets independent Board of Trustees

- 1 Establishing a 17-member Board of Trustees for the University of Rhode Island began as Senate Bill No. 942, but the change was later included in this year's budget.
- 2 All authority for the university that is currently vested in the Council on Postsecondary Education will now be transferred to the new URI Board.
- 3 The law also requires tuition waivers to be disclosed.
- 4 This legislation recognized that URI's needs as a research institution are unique among the state's public institutions of higher learning.

## STATUS

## Signed Into Law



“URI is a world-class university ... Greater self-governance means it can ensure that all decisions affecting it are made with its specific mission and purposes in mind, and will help ensure that those decisions are effective in moving the university forward.”

**Senator V. Susan Sosnowski**  
Lead sponsor of original bill

# Protecting Student Loan Borrowers

## Senate Bill No. 737 Substitute A

## Creating a Student Loan Bill of Rights

- 1 This law will help protect student loan borrowers from deceptive practices by requiring companies that service education loans in Rhode Island to register with the state and by allowing state regulators to examine servicers' business practices.
- 2 It sets standards for student loan servicing, both prohibiting predatory behavior and providing best practices for protecting consumers' rights.
- 3 Servicers will have to follow certain guidelines, such as providing borrowers with their eligibility for any loan relief programs on an annual basis, including income-driven repayment plans and public service loan forgiveness.
- 4 The law allows the Attorney General and the Department of Business Regulation to penalize servicers who violate borrowers' rights and to seek restitution on behalf of borrowers in Rhode Island.



## STATUS

## Signed Into Law



MORE THAN

**133,000**

RHODE ISLANDERS\*  
HAVE A COMBINED

**\$4.5 BILLION**

IN STUDENT LOAN DEBT

\*Includes 16,000 senior citizens

SOURCE: Channel 12 WPRI-TV, June 28, 2019

# First Senate Arts Exhibition

## Senate Resolution No. 393

## Arts education creates a more vibrant Rhode Island

- 1 The Senate was proud to host its first student Arts Exhibition this year, after declaring March as “Arts in the Schools Month.” The celebration coincided with Youth Art Month, which is celebrated by arts, dance, music, and theater organizations nationwide.
- 2 Nearly 75 students from across the state showcased their paintings, etchings, sculptures, and video productions in the State House. The Senate thanks all students and teachers who participated.
- 3 The Senate is especially grateful for the help curating the exhibition from Artist Educator Paul Carpentier and Maggie Anderson, who is the Director of Arts in Education at the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts.

## STATUS

## Resolution Was Enacted



## Arts & the Ocean State

How the arts and cultural industries impact Rhode Island:

**\$1.9 billion**  
in economic activity

**17,750**  
jobs

**3.3%**  
of the state's economy

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis





## Appendix: Education Reform

### Senate Bill No. 112 Substitute A

#### Ensuring financial literacy through education

- This bill would have required all public high schools to offer a class that includes instruction on personal finances beginning in the 2019-2020 school year.
- At minimum, the curriculum would have to include budgeting, maintaining credit, saving, investing, and protecting and insuring assets.
- Beginning with the 2021-2022 school year, students would have been required to demonstrate proficiency in personal finance prior to high school graduation.

**Status:** Passed the Senate

### Senate Bill No. 119

#### Prioritizing civics education so graduates may participate more fully in society

- Beginning with the graduating class of 2020, this bill would have required students attending public schools, or any other school managed and controlled by the state, to demonstrate proficiency in civics education.
- The work required for a student to demonstrate proficiency in civics would have satisfied at least one-half credit or course requirement in history and social studies.

**Status:** Passed the Senate

### Senate Bill No. 719 Substitute A

#### Attracting more math, science, and language teachers through existing state program

- Rhode Island's "Wavemaker Fellowship" encourages eligible graduates of accredited colleges or universities to become full-time employees at Rhode Island-based companies located in the state, by allowing those graduates to earn tax credits to defray their student loan debts.
- This bill would have expanded eligibility for the Wavemaker credits to include people working as elementary or secondary school math, world language, or science educators.

**Status:** Passed the Senate



## Improving student achievement through district-state partnership

- This bill would have helped districts evaluate student improvement and efficiency after implementing the high-quality curriculum they selected (as required by [Senate Bill No. 863 Substitute B](#)).
- The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education would have become a professional support partner with school districts, by collaborating to design student assessments, modify instructional techniques, and improve school culture.
- Department support would have been tailored to each district based on a comprehensive understanding of specific characteristics, such as size, budget, and demographics.

**Status:** Passed the Senate

## Improving testing requirements for new teachers

- This bill would have required the certification test for new teachers to include an instructional component to ensure candidates understand both what they will teach and how to teach that subject matter to students.
- To broaden the pool of prospective educators without diminishing high standards, this bill would have allowed candidates to demonstrate content knowledge and classroom management skills through performance in a classroom setting, such as student teaching experience or an internship, or a combination of the test and classroom performance.

**Status:** Passed the Senate

## Encouraging computer science courses

- This bill would have required students to demonstrate proficiency in one computer science course in order to graduate from a Rhode Island high school.
- In addition, a computer science course would have satisfied a math requirement as long as it was one of the College Board's AP Computer Science courses and the student had successfully completed Algebra I and Algebra II before enrolling in the computer science course

**Status:** Passed the Senate

## Helping districts create dual language immersion programs

- This bill would have required the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop a model policy for districts that want to create dual language immersion programs in their schools.
- The Department would have consulted with school districts that already have a dual language immersion program to incorporate best practices into the model policy.

**Status:** Passed the Senate

## Reviewing grade level promotion standards

- This bill would have required the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to organize a group of stakeholders to review the standards that districts use for grade level promotion.
- The review would have included assessing the process used to determine whether students are promoted to the next grade or retained, as well as considering the social and academic impact that the promotion and retention policies have on students at various grade levels.

**Status:** Held for further study

## Building upon R.I.'s Adult Education programs

- This year, a Senate Commission evaluated whether Rhode Island's Adult Education program should continue to be housed within the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The Commission sought to elevate the role for adult education programs by improving upon current programming, better serving the diverse needs of adult learners, and addressing concerns related to efficiency and effectiveness of these current programs.
- Chaired by Senator Harold M. Metts, the Commission recommended the program should move under the purview of the Governor's Workforce Board (GWB), within the Department of Labor and Training.
- This legislation would have authorized an Adult Education Advisory Committee within the GWB to address all issues and solutions regarding Adult Education programs.
- The legislation would have required the Committee to collaborate with the Department of Education and with school districts to ensure the development of a state plan for Adult Education.
- [Senate Resolution No. 2960](#) in 2018 created this Commission.

**Status:** Passed the Senate



# In the News

## Education Reform

### Rhode Island lawmakers call for sweeping education reforms

Rhode Island lawmakers are calling for major changes to the state's education system. House Speaker Nicholas Mattiello and Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio unveiled a package of bills on Tuesday that would overhaul the state's curricula, teacher assessments, principal certifications and more.

...

"We have high standards in place, as well as assessments that are aligned to those standards. However, we never did the hard work of ensuring our curriculum prepares students for these expectations," President Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) said. "Nor have we done the difficult work of better preparing and supporting teachers so they are equipped to help students succeed. We have the gold standard in education right next door in Massachusetts, and we looked to their model to see what best practices could make a real difference here."

The first bill calls for changes to the state's academic standards. If passed, it would require the Commissioner of Education to change the state's curriculum frameworks to meet curriculum goals and the Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System.

Source Patch

Date May 7, 2019

Author Rachel Nunes

Continue Reading: <https://patch.com/rhode-island/cranston/rhode-island-lawmakers-call-sweeping-education-reforms>

### Democratic leaders call for education reform in Rhode Island

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) — Rhode Island legislative leaders say they're backing a package of bills to reform the state's education system.

Democratic House Speaker Nicholas Mattiello and Democratic Senate President Dominick Ruggerio unveiled seven bills Tuesday.

They say the measures are a priority, and will bring comprehensive reform to curriculum, instruction support, accountability, teacher certification, specialty skills certification, teacher assessments and the principal certification process.

Standardized test results showed Rhode Island students trailing far behind students in Massachusetts late last year.

Source The Associated Press

Date May 7, 2019

Author Staff

Continue Reading: <https://www.apnews.com/3a5700d08d4a443eb0ea99b66ec96e07>



# In the News

## Education Reform

### State senator wants to reexamine school funding formula

PROVIDENCE — State Sen. Ryan Pearson wants to reopen the discussion around how school districts are funded by the state, saying there are a number of inequities that have yet to be addressed.

**Source** The Providence Journal

**Date** June 3, 2019

**Author** Linda Borg

His bill, cosponsored by Senate President Dominick Ruggerio, would reestablish a joint committee to decide which factors, such as poverty and enrollment, determine how much state aid each city and town receives.

“Since the formula was implemented [in 2010], there has been no formal oversight by the General Assembly to see if it’s being implemented correctly,” said Pearson, a Democrat from Cumberland. “When it was passed, it was called the Education Equity and Property Tax Relief Act. The goals were to ensure that all schools were fairly funded and to limit the amount of education costs that property taxes were asked to cover.”

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**Continue Reading:** <https://www.providencejournal.com/news/20190603/state-senator-wants-to-reexamine-school-funding-formula>

### At forum, some Providence parents plead for state to take over schools

PROVIDENCE — Education Commissioner Angélica Infante-Green walked into a room full of pain Wednesday night, and several parents begged her to take over the city’s deeply troubled school system.

**Source** The Providence Journal

**Date** June 27, 2019

**Author** Linda Borg

In the wake of a heartbreaking report on the Providence schools, the new commissioner, joined by Mayor Jorge Elorza, held the first of eight public forums, this one at the William D’Abate Elementary School. Typically, turnout at such meetings is poor. Wednesday night was an exception, as 300 parents and teachers stood shoulder to shoulder and demanded change.

Their stories backed up the report’s findings: schools have low expectations of students, especially students of color; classrooms are often chaotic, with students running the buildings; substitute teachers with little training cycle through classrooms; and parents are ignored, demeaned or unable to access the system at all.

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**Continue Reading:** <https://www.providencejournal.com/news/20190626/at-forum-some-providence-parents-plead-for-state-to-take-over-schools>



# In the News

## Education Reform

### Lawmakers approve Senator Euer's Student Loan Bill of Rights

Legislators today gave their final approval to legislation sponsored by Sen. Dawn Euer and Rep. Joseph M. McNamara to protect student loan borrowers and establish oversight of student loan servicers operating in Rhode Island. The bill, which is backed by General Treasurer Seth Magaziner and Attorney General Peter F. Neronha, now goes to the governor.

**Source** WhatsUpNewp

**Date** June 28, 2019

**Author** News Desk

“By several measures, student loan debt has increased greatly in the last 10 years,” said Representative McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston), chairman of the House Committee on Health, Education and Welfare. “It has surpassed the amount households owe on auto loans, home equity loans and credit cards. This legislation will help to address the crisis by establishing oversight of the student loan process and prohibiting predatory practices.”

Said Senator Euer (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown), “The heavy burden of student debt is challenging enough for the majority of college graduates. Incompetent, inefficient or even deceitful loan servicers should not be allowed to exacerbate their struggles. Student loan servicers must be held accountable to ensure that they are providing honest, reliable information and services to their borrowers.”

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Continue Reading: <https://whatsupnewp.com/2019/06/lawmakers-approve-senator-euers-student-loan-bill-of-rights/>





# Press Releases

## Education Reform

### Senate Bill No. 863 Substitute B

### Senate Bill No. 869 Substitute A

Requiring high-quality curriculum  
and paving the way for principals

**Date** June 27, 2019

### **General Assembly passes education reform bills that would realign curriculum and fast-track principals**

STATE HOUSE — The General Assembly has approved two bills intending to reform education in Rhode Island.

The first bill (2019-S 0863B, 2019-H 5008B), introduced by Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick), chairwoman of the Senate Education Committee, and Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston), chairman of the House Committee on Health, Education and Welfare, would require the Commissioner of Education to align statewide academic standards with curriculum and the Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System.

“This bill would ensure that our academic standards set forth the skills, competencies, and knowledge expected of each student. The curriculum will align with those standards, and the frameworks would provide strategies to help meet the diverse needs of our students, closing any gaps that exist,” said Senator Gallo.

...

[Available Online](#)

### Senate Bill No. 865 Substitute A

Requiring greater school-based management

**Date** June 28, 2019

### **General Assembly passes legislation providing for greater accountability in educational system**

STATE HOUSE — The General Assembly passed an education reform measure introduced by Rep. Gregg Amore (D-Dist. 65, East Providence) and Sen. Ryan W. Pearson (D-Dist. 19, Cumberland, Lincoln) that would provide for greater school accountability.

The bill (2019-S 0865A, 2019-H 6084A) would provide for greater school-based management at the school level, would expand the duties of principals and school improvement teams, and would also establish a new chapter on education accountability which would provide for evaluations, assessments, and education review reports on the performance of both school districts and individual schools.

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[Available Online](#)



# Press Releases

## Education Reform

**Senate Bill No. 46**

**Senate Bill No. 112**  
**Substitute A**

**Ensuring schools meet multiple  
needs of today's students**

**Date** June 18, 2019

**Senate passes several education bills, including financial  
literacy, dual language immersion**

STATE HOUSE — The Senate today approved several education-related bills. The legislation tackles everything from dual language immersion to financial literacy.

“These bills really focus on the specifics that the Senate would like to address when it comes to education reform,” said Sen. Hanna Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick), chairwoman of the Senate Education Committee. “There are several education initiatives that we’ve been discussing in the Senate for the past few years, and we really think these bills are an integral part of bringing about the changes we are all looking for in our schools.”

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[Available Online](#)







# Rhode Island Senate

seeks to eliminate

## Elder Abuse and Financial Exploitation



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# Elder Abuse and Financial Exploitation



The Rhode Island Senate has consistently recognized the importance of the older adult population to the overall health of our state. In 2019, a Senate Task Force researched the burgeoning national trend of elder abuse and financial exploitation.

Rhode Island's growing elder population is proportionately larger than the national average.

Those who are 65 and older make up 17% of the state's population versus 13% nationally.

A decade from now, nearly 25% of the Ocean State's population is estimated to be 65 and older.

Furthermore, estimates show that about 1 in 10 Americans age 60 and older has experienced elder abuse.

*“The prevalence and projected growth of elder abuse and exploitation is deeply troubling, particularly in light of our findings that its full extent can't be known because it is so rarely reported or investigated. ... It's critical that we do everything we can to protect older Rhode Islanders from this abuse.”*

**Senator Cynthia A. Coyne**  
Chairwoman of the Special  
Task Force to Study Elderly  
Abuse and Financial  
Exploitation

The Task Force recommended ways to address the following concerns:

- Elder abuse and financial exploitation is prevalent and on the rise;
- Elder abuse is underreported;
- Seniors are particularly vulnerable to financial exploitation – The problem is widespread and growing quickly;
- Increased monitoring, data collection, and education within Rhode Island's guardianship program is needed; and
- Cohesive and collaborative education, training, and resources are key components to preventing and mitigating elder abuse and financial exploitation.

The following pages detail the Senate's work to prevent this growing national problem.

The Task Force report is available electronically:  
<http://www.rilegislature.gov/reports/ElderAbuseFinancialExploitation2019.pdf>

# Protecting Seniors and Vulnerable Adults

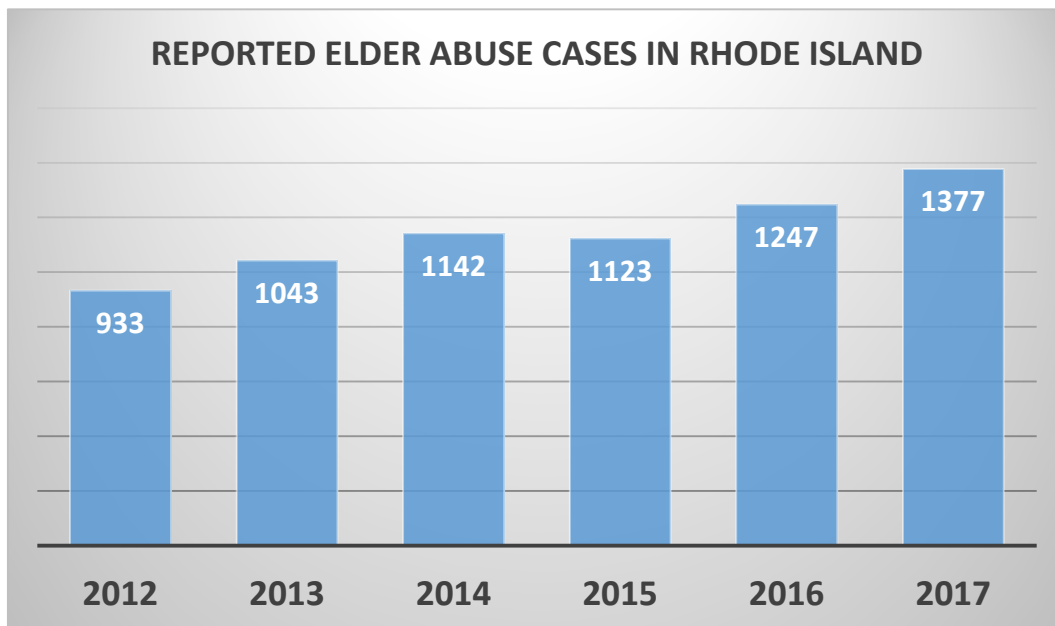
## Senate Bill No. 603 Substitute A

### Strengthening elder abuse reporting requirements

- 1 This law strengthens elder abuse reporting requirements in Rhode Island.
- 2 When an individual reports such abuse, the law now outlines the detailed information that must be submitted to the Rhode Island Office of Healthy Aging (formerly the state's Division of Elderly Affairs).
- 3 In Rhode Island, it is mandatory to report elder abuse, neglect, exploitation, and self-neglect. Any person who has a reasonable cause to believe that a senior is being abused has a duty to report, under Rhode Island General Law, § 42-66-8.
- 4 This bill was one of two introduced in response to the work of the Senate's Special Task Force to Study Elderly Abuse and Financial Exploitation.

**STATUS**

**Signed Into Law**



SOURCE: Rhode Island Office of Healthy Aging

**Senate Bill No. 845**  
**Substitute A**

**Preventing elder abuse and financial exploitation**

1 This law will help to protect seniors and other individuals who are in need of a guardian.

2 Any person seeking appointment as a guardian is now required to undergo a national criminal background check.

“ National background checks are required of child care employees, pawn shops, massage therapists, R.I. Lottery employees, and adult day care employees, to name a few. ... Our elderly and vulnerable residents are as deserving of protection as the consumers and assets of the service providers I just identified.”

**Theresa C. Donovan, Town Clerk, Narragansett**  
Verbal testimony to the Special Task Force  
to Study Elderly Abuse and Financial Exploitation

**STATUS**

**Signed Into Law**



**Senate Bill No. 31**  
**Substitute A**

**Supporting the autonomy of R.I. seniors  
and people with disabilities**

1 This law establishes the Supportive Decision-Making Act, which is a less restrictive alternative to guardianships.

2 Supported decision-making is a process of supporting and accommodating an adult in a way that enables the individual to make life decisions without impeding the person's self-determination. The process allows people to maintain independence while getting help.

**STATUS**

**Signed Into Law**





# Protecting Financial Assets

## Senate Bill No. 433 Substitute A

### Preventing financial exploitation

- 1 This legislation creates the Senior Savings Protection Act, which protects seniors and adults with disabilities from financial exploitation.
- 2 The law stipulates that a “qualified individual” may refuse a request for disbursement of funds from the account of a senior or an individual with a disability under certain circumstances.
- 3 State entities must develop a website that includes training resources to help such “qualified individuals” detect and prevent the financial exploitation of older adults and individuals with a disability.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



## Estimates indicate that ...

**1 in 10**

Americans age 60 and older has experienced elder abuse.

**1 in 23**

Elder abuse cases is reported to Adult Protective Services.

**1 in 44**

Cases of financial abuse is ever reported.

SOURCES: [National Council on Aging](#), [Rhode Island Legal Services](#), [National Adult Protective Services Association](#)



# In the News

## Elder Abuse and Financial Exploitation

### Elder abuse in R.I., Part 1: Reported attacks on the rise, yet most perpetrators avoid prison

Seventy-eight-year-old Mary Lamar Grancher lived in fear of her son Garry Lamar, 47. He was prone to violent rages — often spitting in his mother’s face, grabbing her throat, shoving her around and calling her crude names, according to police reports.

After allowing Lamar to live in her North Kingstown home for four years without paying rent, Grancher kicked her son out. But Lamar returned daily, banging on her door and begging for money. “I would like to see you dead,” he told her. He repeatedly stole her cat, Melo, which he threatened to kill unless she paid him hundreds of dollars in ransom.

As a neighbor testified, Mary would often “cry and cave in.” By July 2007, Lamar had forced his mother to hand over more than \$15,000. ...

**Source** The Providence Journal

**Date** August 24, 2018

**Author** Jack Brook, Rebecca Ellis, Katrina Northrop and Asher Woodbury/  
Special to The Journal

Continue Reading: <https://www.providencejournal.com/news/20180824/elder-abuse-in-ri-reported-attacks-on-rise-yet-most-perpetrators-avoid-prison>

Read the rest of the series, “Elder abuse in Rhode Island,” by *The Providence Journal*:

No uniform guideline in R.I. for charging elder-abuse offenses: <https://www.providencejournal.com/news/20180824/no-uniform-guideline-in-ri-for-charging-elder-abuse-offenses>

Part 2: Barriers to prosecution often leave victims at risk: <https://www.providencejournal.com/news/20180826/elder-abuse-in-ri-barriers-to-prosecution-often-leave-victims-at-risk>

Part 3: Creating a stronger safety net for victims: <https://www.providencejournal.com/news/20180827/creating-stronger-safety-net-for-victims>

Part 4: Mother and son locked in cycle of violence: <https://www.providencejournal.com/news/20180828/elder-abuse-in-ri-mother-and-son-locked-in-cycle-of-violence>

Part 5: Police training is a crucial part of solution: <https://www.providencejournal.com/news/20180829/elder-abuse-in-ri-police-training-is-crucial-part-of-solution>

Part 6: When a ‘guardian’ becomes a fiscal predator: <https://www.providencejournal.com/news/20180830/elder-abuse-in-ri-when-guardian-becomes-fiscal-predator>

Part 7: Gaming the system is easy for fiscal guardians: <https://www.providencejournal.com/news/20180831/elder-abuse-in-ri-gaming-system-is-easy-for-fiscal-guardians>

Part 8: Scammers prey upon victims’ trust and fear: <https://www.providencejournal.com/news/20180901/elder-abuse-in-ri-scammers-prey-upon-victims-trust-and-fear>

Part 9: Exploitation puts a high price on friendship: <https://www.providencejournal.com/news/20180902/elder-abuse-in-ri-exploitation-puts-high-price-on-friendship>



# Press Releases

## Elder Abuse and Financial Exploitation

### Senate Bill No. 31 Substitute A

**Allows greater autonomy for the elderly and people with disabilities who need support**

**Date** June 26, 2019

### **Assembly OKs bill establishing ‘supported decision making’**

STATE HOUSE – The General Assembly today approved legislation sponsored by Sen. Adam J. Satchell and Rep. Robert E. Craven to establish a formal process recognizing “supported decision making,” a structure of support for disabled or aging individuals.

The legislation, which now heads to the governor’s desk, establishes a system of personal support that is less restrictive than guardianship to help individuals maintain independence while receiving assistance in making and communicating important life decisions. It is aimed at providing an alternative with more self-determination for individuals who are aging or who have developmental or intellectual disabilities.

“Regardless of disabilities, all people deserve dignity and the right to make as many of their own decisions about their lives as possible. While guardianship may be the right fit for some people, supported decision making is much less restrictive and maintains individuals’ autonomy while ensuring they have the help they need. This is an opportunity for more fulfilling, independent lives for many Rhode Islanders,” said Senator Satchell (D-Dist. 9, West Warwick).

Under the bill (2019-S 0031A, 2019-H 5909), individuals in Rhode Island would be able to designate another person, or a team of people, as a supporter who would help them gather and weigh information, options, responsibilities and consequences of their life decisions about their personal affairs, support services, medical or psychological treatment, education and more. The supporter would also help the individual communicate the person’s wishes to those who need to know.

...

[Available Online](#)





# Rhode Island Senate

intensifies

## Fight to End the Opioid Epidemic



@risenate



@RISenate





# Battling the Opioid Epidemic



Drug overdose deaths in Rhode Island rose seven years in a row – from 138 people in 2009 to 336 people in 2016. State health data shows that the numbers have since dropped slightly, with 324 people dying in 2017 and 314 people dying in 2018.

Despite those recent decreases in overdose deaths, this public health crisis continues to grip Rhode Island and the nation. The grim statistics behind the opioid epidemic help explain why the Rhode Island Senate continues its relentless work to address the root causes of addiction, to warn patients of the dangers of drugs often prescribed to treat pain, and to seek treatment and recovery options.

State health data includes troubling indicators about how the use of fentanyl has complicated any progress that might otherwise have begun to further decrease overdose

“If we are truly going to rein in the overdose and addiction epidemic, we must continue to work with partners in government and the community. Our efforts must be comprehensive and go beyond legislation. Effective approaches are working in settings as diverse as our prisons, health clinics, and courts, and on the streets. The Legislature can continue to help improve outcomes through both funding and legislation.”

**Senator Joshua Miller**  
Chairman of the Senate  
Committee on Health and  
Human Services

deaths. In 2009, just 5% of overdose deaths were related to the use of fentanyl. By 2018, that percentage had risen to 71%. Fentanyl is a highly potent opioid that is often added to drugs sold on the black market. People frequently don't even realize the drugs they have bought were laced with deadly fentanyl.

The Rhode Island Senate is proud to work closely and diligently with health care and law enforcement professionals to address the opioid crisis and to limit its devastating effects on Rhode Island families.

Stopping the opioid epidemic demands a multi-pronged approach that addresses prevention, rescue, and treatment and recovery – all of which have been priorities at the Senate in recent years and will continue to guide the Senate into the future.

# Prevention

## Senate Bill No. 291 as amended

### Informing patients about the risk of opioids

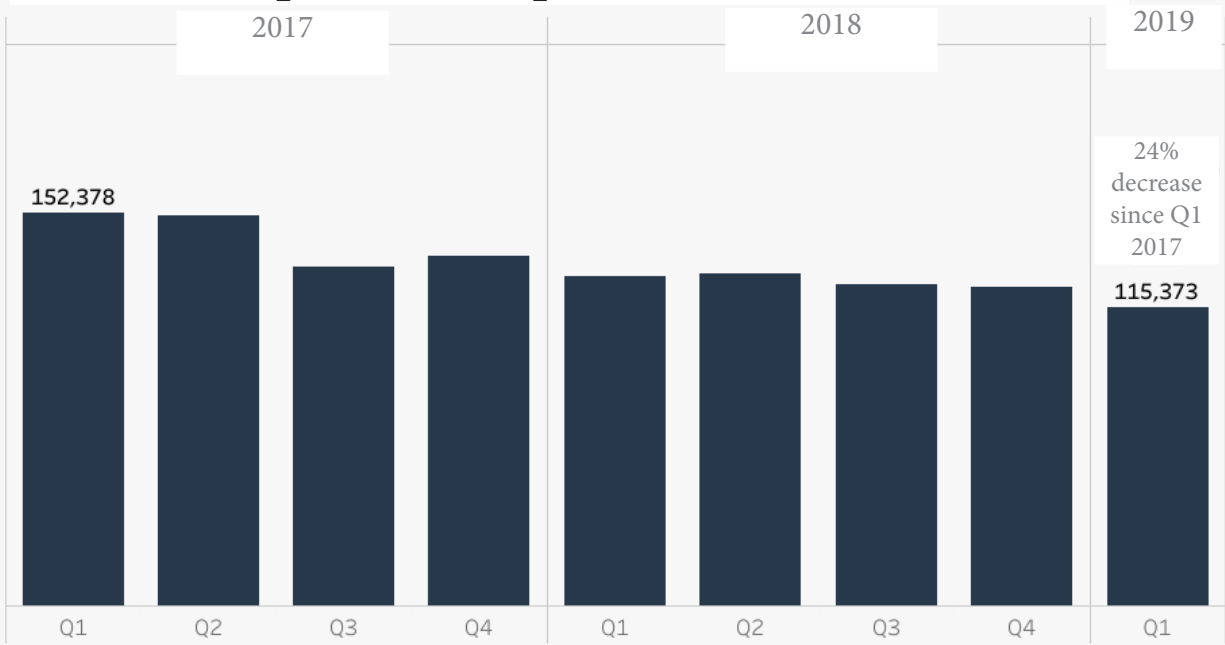
- 1 This law requires the Department of Health to compile a list that includes at least 10 of the most prescribed drugs containing opioids and other schedule II controlled substances.
- 2 This mandatory list must contain warnings about the overuse, misuse, and mixing of those drugs with other drugs, specifically benzodiazepines and/or alcohol. The warnings must note that associated dangers include dependence, addiction, and death.
- 3 All pharmacies are required to display the list and to inform patients that a partial fill of a prescription is an option at the patient's request.

## STATUS

## Signed Into Law



### Number of Opioid Prescriptions, 2017 to 2019



SOURCE: [Prevent Overdose RI](#)

**State Budget, Article 13,**  
**Fiscal Year 2020**

**Creating new funding for opioid prevention,  
treatment, and education services**

- 1 The Opioid Stewardship Act requires pharmaceutical manufacturers, distributors, and wholesalers in Rhode Island to pay \$5 million annually into an “opioid stewardship fund.”
- 2 Each company would pay into the fund a proportion of that set annual amount, based on its in-state market share of certain opioid-related manufacturing sales or distribution fees.
- 3 Rhode Island is among a handful of states that have created such stewardship funds, which are used to pay for opioid treatment, recovery, prevention, education, and related programs.

**STATUS**

**Signed Into Law**



“ We are doing everything we can to address the opioid crisis from every direction, from better interventions for preventing addiction to requiring the pharmaceutical companies who have promoted these drugs to help pay for the problems they’ve caused. I’m proud that my colleagues in both chambers of the General Assembly have made this issue a priority.”

**Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio**

**Senate Bill No. 1032**

**Warning students about the dangers  
of mixing opioids and alcohol**

- 1 This law adds a new component to the prevention programs for substance use disorder and suicide that are part of the health education curriculum taught in public schools.
- 2 These programs must now warn students that mixing opioids and alcohol can cause accidental death.

**STATUS**

**Signed Into Law**



# Prevention

## Senate Bill No. 297 Substitute A



### Preventing overdose deaths

- 1 This legislation would have authorized the Department of Health to establish regulations and to explore the creation of a harm reduction center as a pilot program.
- 2 In these “supervised injection facilities,” people can consume controlled substances that they have obtained on their own. About 120 such facilities operate in 12 countries, according to the American Medical Association.
- 3 This bill would have required health care professionals to work on-site to help prevent overdoses and to provide referrals to appropriate counseling and medical treatment.

## STATUS

## Passed the Senate



## Harm reduction recognizes that:

- It is not helpful to minimize or ignore the harm associated with drug use;
- Substance use disorder is a reality; and
- Health professionals want to focus on reducing the harmful effects of substance use rather than stigmatizing people with substance use disorders.

SOURCE: Data from [Harm Reduction Coalition](#); graphic created by R.I. Senate Policy Office

“ Studies from other countries have shown that supervised injection facilities reduce the number of overdose deaths, reduce transmission rates of infectious disease, and increase the number of individuals initiating treatment for substance use disorders without increasing drug trafficking or crime in the areas where the facilities are located.”

American Medical Association

# Rescue

## Senate Bill No. 953

### Expanding Good Samaritan Overdose Prevention Act

- 1 This law adds law enforcement and emergency medical personnel to the Good Samaritan Overdose Prevention Act of 2016.
- 2 Last year, legislators empowered first responders in the fight against opioid-related overdoses by allowing them to carry naloxone kits. Health care professionals recommend wide usage of naloxone because the medication causes no ill effects and may save someone's life.
- 3 This law protects first responders from civil and criminal liability if they use naloxone when they believe a person is overdosing.

## Senate Bill No. 409 Substitute A

### Preparing school personnel to help if students or staff overdose

- 1 This law requires all public and private schools to stock naloxone, a medication that reverses the effects of an opioid overdose, in each school facility.
- 2 School nurse-teachers or other personnel who administer naloxone to any student or staff member will be protected from civil and criminal liability if they believed, in good faith, that the person was overdosing and if they acted with reasonable care to administer the medication.

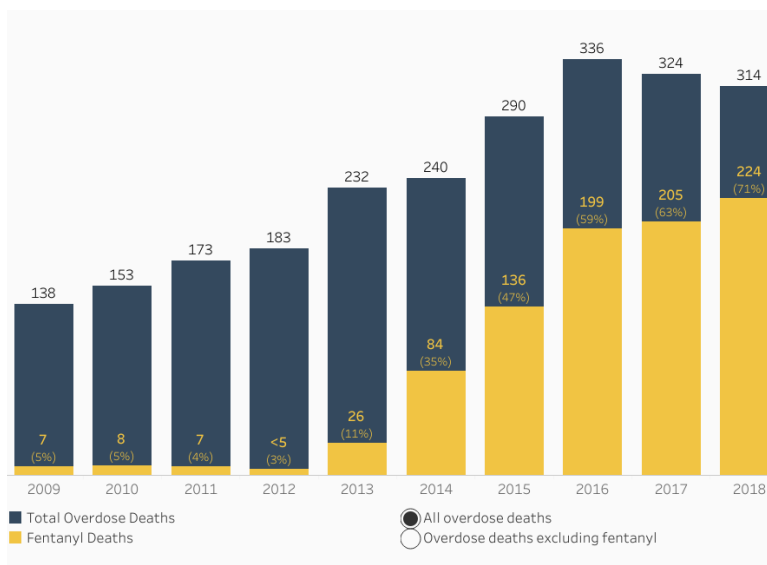
## STATUS

## Signed Into Law



## Overdose Deaths due to Fentanyl, 2009 to 2018

SOURCE: [Prevent Overdose RI](#)





# Rescue

## Senate Bill No. 799 Substitute A as amended

## Preventing discrimination against people who fill naloxone prescriptions

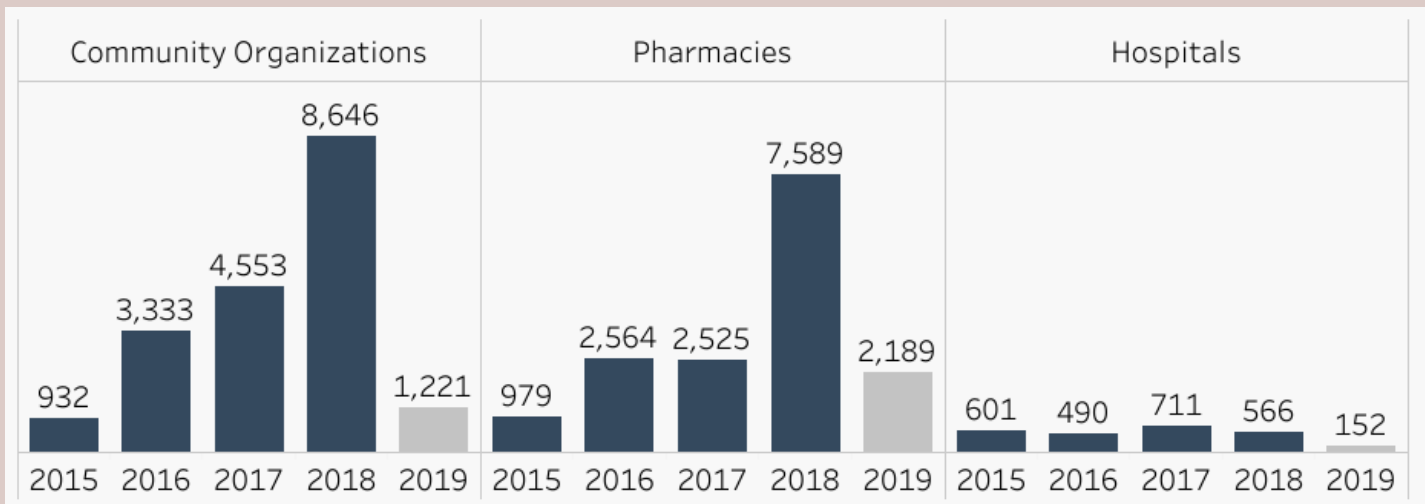
- 1 The Senate developed this legislation after learning about a Rhode Island health care professional who was denied life insurance coverage because she had filled a prescription for naloxone – a practice recommended by health care experts so she could potentially rescue someone who overdoses.
- 2 This law prohibits life insurance companies from denying coverage to people who have prescriptions or who have filled prescriptions for naloxone, the life-saving medicine that can reverse an opioid overdose.
- 3 Rhode Island was among the first states to ensure that anyone may obtain naloxone at a local pharmacy without a prescription from a doctor. All health insurers in Rhode Island cover at least one type of generic naloxone, at either no cost or with a low-cost co-payment.

## STATUS

## Signed Into Law



## Naloxone Distribution Breakdown in Rhode Island, 2015 to 2019



SOURCE: [Prevent Overdose RI](#) [Data is updated quarterly online and will reflect additional 2019 quarters.]

# Treatment and Recovery

## Senate Bill No. 139 Substitute A

## Supporting hospitalized patients with opioid use disorder

- 1 This bill amends the Alexander C. Perry and Brandon Goldner Act, which passed in 2016. The Act requires comprehensive discharge planning for patients treated for mental health and substance use disorders.
- 2 This law follows federal health-privacy guidance that allows and encourages hospitals and freestanding emergency-care facilities to contact a patient's emergency contacts and certified peer recovery specialists in certain situations.
- 3 This change will improve support for people hospitalized for drug overdoses and mental health emergencies by increasing the likelihood that their families or others wishing to assist them with treatment are aware of their hospitalization.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



## Senate Bill No. 962 Substitute A

## Establishing requirements for the Superior Court's diversion program

- 1 This law outlines specific requirements for a diversion program within the Superior Court, which was first established by the General Assembly in 2017.
- 2 Studies have shown that people battling addiction face an increased likelihood of rehabilitation when courts provide alternative means to rehabilitation, including out-of-court supervision and specific mental health and substance use disorder treatment goals rather than jail sentences.
- 3 Superior Court justices, the Attorney General, the Public Defender, and public policy makers who were instrumental in the passage of Rhode Island's Justice Reinvestment Initiative in 2017 assisted in drafting this legislation.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



## Appendix: Fight to End the Opioid Epidemic

### Senate Bill No. 981

#### **Preventing the over-prescription of opiates**

- This bill prohibits an initial prescription of opiates for an adult patient from exceeding the maximum daily dose set by the Department of Health.
- Under most circumstances, this law prevents doctors from prescribing more than 20 doses of an opiate to a minor patient.
- Doctors are required to discuss the risks associated with opiate use with a minor patient's guardian under this law. Such discussion must be documented in the patient's medical record.

**Status:** Signed Into Law

### Senate Bill No. 77 Substitute A

#### **Expanding access to substance use disorder programs in high schools**

- This legislation would have expanded access to drug-awareness programs in Rhode Island's public high schools.
- The director of the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals would have had authority to establish criteria for programs within Rhode Island high schools to raise awareness about the dangers of substance use disorders.
- Those programs would have been funded through fines associated with certain motor vehicle offenses and moving violations, as well as by grants procured by the Department.

**Status:** Passed the Senate

### Senate Bill No. 238 Substitute A

#### **Increasing funding for high schools to offer prevention programs**

- This legislation would have provided a funding stream for substance use disorder prevention programs in Rhode Island's high schools.
- If this bill had become law, any person convicted of driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol or of refusing to submit to a chemical breath test would have been assessed a \$250 fee for substance use disorder education.
- All proceeds raised through such a fee would have funded prevention programs and student assistance programs.

**Status:** Passed the Senate

## Informing patients about the risks of prescription opioids

- This bill would have required health care professionals to discuss with patients the risks of prescription opioid drugs upon the first prescription, the second refill, and/or a third prescription.

**Status:** Passed the Senate

## Increasing access to medication-assisted treatment

- This bill would have increased access to medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for individuals with opioid use disorder.
- The bill would have required insurers to cover at least one type of four different categories of such medication at low or no cost to the patient.

**Status:** Passed the Senate

## Improving access to recovery services

- This bill sought to increase access to recovery services for individuals with substance use disorders.
- This bill would have required that a treatment plan be submitted to a patient's health insurer if a qualified medical professional determined that residential or inpatient care would be the most appropriate level of care necessary for that patient.
- A patient would have remained presumptively covered for residential or inpatient services during the health insurance review process.

**Status:** Passed the Senate

## Decriminalizing buprenorphine - a medication often used to treat opioid use disorder

- This bill would have excluded the possession of buprenorphine from those controlled substances that can result in criminal penalties.
- Buprenorphine is a long-acting opioid medication that is generally used to treat opioid addiction. It does not produce the euphoria and sedation caused by heroin or other opioids, but it reduces or eliminates withdrawal symptoms associated with opioid dependence and has a low risk of overdose.

**Status:** Passed the Senate



# In the News

## Fight to End the Opioid Epidemic

### R.I. Senate president introduces proposal for opioid tax

PROVIDENCE — Senate President Dominick Ruggerio wants the companies that make and distribute prescription painkillers to pay for anti-overdose medication through a new opioid tax, he announced Wednesday.

**Source** The Providence Journal

**Date** April 10, 2019

**Author** Patrick Anderson

The tax would raise \$7.5 million per year to buy naloxone, a drug that reverses the effects of an overdose, according to the text of a bill introduced by Ruggerio on Wednesday.

The bill would require all licensed drug manufacturers and distributors in the state to report their opioid sales to the Department of Health each year. Health officials would then apportion the \$7.5 million in total annual payments among the companies based on how many morphine milligram equivalents of painkiller they sold.

The tax works out to about 1 cent for each milligram of opiate sold.

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**Continue Reading:** <https://www.providencejournal.com/news/20190410/ri-senate-president-introduces-proposal-for-opioid-tax>

### Bill aims to remove barrier to naloxone amid opioid crisis

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) — Rhode Island's General Assembly has approved a measure to prohibit life insurance companies from denying or limiting policies for people with a prescription for an opioid overdose-reversal medication.

**Source** The Providence Journal

**Date** June 25, 2019

**Author** The Associated Press

The bill heads to the governor's desk, after passing the House on Monday and the Senate last month.

Democratic Senate President Dominick Ruggerio and Democratic Rep. Justine Caldwell, of East Greenwich, sponsored the bill.

The issue came to Ruggerio's attention because a nurse who got a naloxone prescription was denied life insurance in Rhode Island.

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**Continue Reading:** <https://www.providencejournal.com/news/20190625/bill-aims-to-remove-barrier-to-naloxone-amid-opioid-crisis>





# In the News

## Fight to End the Opioid Epidemic

### Construction workers prone to overdose deaths in R.I.

PROVIDENCE -- The construction industry leads the way in Rhode Island when it comes to fatal overdoses, according to the state Department of Health.

**Source** The Providence Journal

**Date** August 20, 2019

**Author** Katie Mulvaney

Data presented to Governor Gina Raimondo's Overdose Prevention and Intervention Task Force shows that a quarter -- or 140 of the 569 -- overdose deaths in Rhode Island from July 2016 through June 2018 came from fields that include carpentry, laborers, construction workers, electricians and commercial fishing. Of those deaths, 20 percent were in the construction industry alone.

Eighty percent of the fatal overdoses in the construction and maintenance fields involved fentanyl, a powerful synthetic opioid painkiller that is 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine.

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**Continue Reading:** <https://www.providencejournal.com/news/20190820/construction-workers-prone-to-overdose-deaths-in-ri?>



# Press Releases

## Fight to End the Opioid Epidemic

### Senate Bill No. 291 as amended

### Warnings about opioids would be similar to those for tobacco products

**Date** June 26, 2019

#### **Assembly approves bill to post opioid warning signs at all pharmacies in R.I.**

STATE HOUSE – The General Assembly today approved legislation sponsored by Rep. Justine A. Caldwell and Sen. Bridget G. Valverde to require signs at pharmacies warning customers about dangers associated with opioids. The bill (2019-H 5184, 2019-S 0291aa), which is set to take effect Sept. 1, now goes to the governor's desk.

The signs would be similar to warning signs about tobacco products required wherever they are sold, and are meant to ensure that customers are aware of the possible dangers connected with opioids when they fill prescriptions for them.

...

“A great many of the people who become addicted to opioids begin with a valid prescription after surgery or an accident. Every person who gets a prescription for them needs to be aware of what the risks are, take only what they need, and make sure they don't let their prescription fall into anyone else's hands,” said Sen. Bridget G. Valverde (D-Dist. 35, North Kingstown, South Kingstown, East Greenwich, Narragansett). “Our state should do every single thing we can to spread public awareness about how easy it is to become addicted to opioids. Signs at the pharmacy are a good opportunity to impress that message upon patients one more time, in a place where they can get answers to any questions they may have about their prescription. Every patient who leaves the pharmacy with an opioid prescription should also leave with a clear message about using them safely.”

...

[Available Online](#)



# Press Releases

## Fight to End the Opioid Epidemic

**Senate Bill No. 981**

**Senate Bill No. 953**

**Senate President and House Speaker  
collaborate to curb overdoses**

**Date**

June 27, 2019

### **Lawmakers limit first-time opioid prescriptions, expand Good Samaritan Overdose Prevention Act**

STATE HOUSE – Lawmakers today approved two bills sponsored by House Speaker Nicholas A. Mattiello and Senate President Dominick Ruggerio to help curb the opioid overdose epidemic.

The bills, which now go to the governor, place limits on first-time opioid prescriptions and expand the Good Samaritan Overdose Prevention Act to include law enforcement and emergency medical personnel.

...

Said Senate President Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence), “We are doing everything we can to address the opioid crisis from every direction, from better interventions for preventing addiction to requiring the pharmaceutical companies who have promoted these drugs to help pay for the problems they’ve caused. I’m proud that my colleagues in both chambers of the General Assembly have made this issue a priority. We all understand that this epidemic is in every one of our districts, affecting the lives of people we know. It’s personal for just about everyone here, and we’re going to keep working to put an end to this crisis.”

One of the measures (2019-H 5537A, 2019-S 0981) passed today would restrict first-time prescriptions for adults to the maximum daily dosage established by the Department of Health. It would also restrict all prescriptions to children to 20 doses, with exceptions for certain conditions and medicines designed for substance abuse or opioid dependence treatment.

The other (2019-H 5536, 2019-S 0953) would add law enforcement and emergency medical personnel to the Good Samaritan Overdose Prevention Act, which protects them from civil or criminal liability arising from helping a person they believe is overdosing.

Many police and EMTs in the state are equipped with kits for administering naloxone – the opioid-overdose antidote commonly known by its trade name, Narcan. In fact, a change made to the Good Samaritan Overdose Prevention Act last year allows them to distribute naloxone kits to at-risk individuals or their families or friends so they are equipped in case of an overdose.

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[Available Online](#)



# Press Releases

## Fight to End the Opioid Epidemic

### Senate Bill No. 139 Substitute A

### Alexander C. Perry and Brandon Goldner Act improves hospital discharge planning

**Date**

July 2, 2019

**Bill signed to expand support following overdose,  
mental health ER visits**

STATE HOUSE – With the governor’s signature, a new law passed by the General Assembly has expanded the Alexander C. Perry and Brandon Goldner Act on hospital discharge planning to better help patients with drug and mental health emergencies with recovery.

Sponsored by Senate Health and Human Services Committee Chairman Joshua Miller and House Majority Whip John G. Edwards, the legislation (2019-S 0139A, 2019-H 5383) allows hospitals to contact the patient’s emergency contact and a certified peer recovery specialist in certain situations, amending Rhode Island law to make it consistent with new federal HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996) guidance.

The change will improve support for those hospitalized for drug overdoses and mental health emergencies by increasing the likelihood that their families or others wishing to assist them with treatment are aware of their hospitalization.

“Engaging patients’ personal support networks is critical to helping them recover and to ending the cycle of relapse and re-hospitalization. The federal government has recognized that patients with addiction or mental health issues may be unwilling or unable to consent to contact with their emergency contact or recovery coach. Amending state law to allow hospitals to make those calls will help provide better treatment and connect patients to support when they are discharged,” said Senator Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence).

...

[Available Online](#)



# Press Releases

## Fight to End the Opioid Epidemic

### Senate Bill No. 409 Substitute A

### Requiring all schools to provide and maintain opioid antagonists

**Date** June 28, 2019

#### **Senator Lawson's and Representative Serodio's bills that require Narcan on school sites pass the General Assembly**

STATE HOUSE – Sen. Valarie J. Lawson (D-Dist. 14, East Providence) and Rep. Joe Serodio's (D-Dist. 64, East Providence) legislation (2019-S 0409A / 2019-H 6086A) that requires private, in addition to public, schools to provide and maintain in each school facility opioid antagonists, such as Narcan, passed the General Assembly tonight.

“No one can deny any longer that the opioid crisis is affecting every aspect of our society, even within our schools. This bill will protect staff, visitors, and even students, if the worst should occur and someone begins overdosing in a school setting. I wish this bill was not necessary, but unfortunately, it is and we needed to pass this bill to save lives,” said Senator Lawson.

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[Available Online](#)







# Rhode Island Senate

reinforces

## Good Government and Public Infrastructure



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# Reining in State Spending

## State Budget, Article 2, Fiscal Year 2020

## Instituting new controls when state departments spend more than appropriated

1

When state departments or agencies expect to overspend, they must now file monthly budget reports with the chairpersons of the Senate and House Finance Committees – to explain the corrective actions taken to control spending.

2

The state budget officer and controller shall ensure the entity's expenditures for the remainder of the fiscal year do not exceed the amount appropriated.

3

Unless there is an immediate health and safety need, the state controller is prohibited from authorizing payments for new personnel, purchases, or contracts for any state entity unable to stay within its appropriation. In such cases, the department or agency must document its need for additional funds to both Finance Committee chairpersons.

4

Either committee chairperson may also request a written report from the Director of Administration about whether overspending resulted in disciplinary action – or why it did not.



STATUS

Signed Into Law



# Good Government

## Senate Bill No. 500 Substitute A

### Strengthening R.I.'s Hospital Conversions Act

1 Nonprofit hospitals are now included in the Hospital Conversions Act, which outlines specific reporting and regulatory requirements for the sale or transfer of a hospital. Previously, the act only applied to for-profit hospitals.

2 The law extends the enforcement period from 3 years to 5 years for conditions the state may set regarding any hospital conversion. It also doubles penalties for failing to comply with conversion terms: To \$2 million.

## Senate Bill No. 431 Substitute A

### Strengthening reporting requirements for employee pension plans

1 This new law establishes minimum reporting requirements for pension plans administered in the state by religious institutions, which are exempt from reporting requirements under federal law.

2 This law responds to the collapse of the St. Joseph Health Services of R.I. Retirement Plan, which covered about 2,700 current and former employees of Our Lady of Fatima and Roger Williams hospitals.

## STATUS

## Signed Into Law



@SenatorRuggerio

**Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio  
directed his Twitter followers to this news article:**

From the @NYTimes:

“Retirees across the country are feeling the effects of underfunded pensions from religious organizations.” Legislation enacted this year brings transparency to funds to avoid the situation St. Joseph’s pensioners found themselves in.

The New York Times, September 12, 2019

# Protecting Consumers and Infrastructure

## Senate Resolution No. 194 Substitute A

### Evaluating electric and gas distribution system

1

This resolution creates a 19-member Senate Commission that will make a comprehensive study and evaluate Rhode Island's electric and natural gas transmission and distribution system infrastructure.



**STATUS**

**Resolution Was Enacted**



## National Grid expects gas outage to last at least a week; 10,000+ impacted

by: WPRI.com Staff

Posted: Jan 22, 2019 / 08:00 PM EST / Updated: Jan 23, 2019 / 10:27 PM EST

NEWPORT, R.I. (WPRI) — As thousands of residents remain without gas service on Aquidneck Island, National Grid is working around the clock to resolve the problem for affected customers.

...

SOURCE: [Channel 12 WPRI-TV](#), January 22, 2019

## Senate Bill No. 538 Substitute A

### Ensuring public safety

1

This law requires that plans for natural gas infrastructure be built in accordance with design plans and specifications approved by a Rhode Island registered professional engineer when such work could pose a material public safety risk.

**STATUS**

**Signed Into Law**





## Senate Bill No. 189 Substitute A as amended

## Requiring utility companies to repave R.I. roads adequately

1

This law creates “The Rhode Island Utility Fair Share Roadway Repair Act” to ensure utility companies adequately repair roadways after working on them.

2

Utility companies frequently alter roads to update lines and gas mains, but then often repair them with a simple patch that may deteriorate over time.

3

The law requires a curb-to-curb repaving and provides for a complaint procedure to guarantee that repairs are satisfactory.



**STATUS**

**Signed Into Law**



## Senate Bill No. 399

## Informing customers of nonregulated power producers

1

This law requires nonregulated power producers to provide residential customers with the ability to cancel electricity service electronically and an alternative method for those without internet access.

2

The nonregulated power producers must also provide customers with contract expiration dates at least 30 days prior to expiration.

3

Nonregulated power producers are further prohibited from automatically renewing a contract with a residential customer as of August 1, 2019.

**STATUS**

**Signed Into Law**



# Regulating Currency

## Senate Bill No. 889

### Ensuring consumer equity

1

This law requires all retail establishments to accept cash in payment for goods and services, excluding online purchases.

2

This will ensure that no customer is prevented from purchasing goods or services because he or she is using cash.



## STATUS

## Signed Into Law



## Senate Bill No. 753 Substitute A as amended

### Establishing simple regulatory provisions for new forms of currency

1

This law seeks to clarify and streamline the state's financial regulatory structure for users of blockchain technology.

2

This law only concerns the functions of blockchain that involve currency or virtual currency.

#### Blockchain Technology

- The database technology can be used to store information in a secure and public or encrypted manner.
- Its most high-profile use is to track the virtual currency Bitcoin.
- However, the technology has many applications — financial and otherwise.

## STATUS

## Signed Into Law



## Appendix: Good Government and Public Infrastructure

### Senate Bill No. 40

#### **Maintaining net neutrality with state contracts**

- This bill would have required the state to award internet service contracts only to providers that maintain core principles of net neutrality.
- The tenets of net neutrality prohibit the blocking of lawful content or applications; throttling or impairing lawful internet traffic; offering paid prioritization of content or applications; or unreasonably interfering with users' ability to access lawful content or applications.

**Status:** Passed the Senate

### Senate Bill No. 171 Substitute A

#### **Updating state laws and job descriptions to use appropriate language about disabilities**

- This law seeks to update Rhode Island state laws and state job descriptions to ensure that appropriate disability language is used in both.
- The law describes which language should replace outdated terms that still exist in laws and may be used in state job descriptions.
- The new language emphasizes that individuals are people first and that their disabilities are secondary. It is intended to establish a respectful environment for all Rhode Islanders.

**Status:** Signed Into Law

### Senate Bill No. 254 Substitute A as amended

#### **Improving the state's customer service through cultural competency training**

- This act would have required the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Opportunity to create and execute annual training in cultural competency for all state and municipal employees and to make this training available to municipal employees, upon request.
- "Cultural competency" would be defined as an understanding of how institutions and individuals can respectfully respond to people from all different backgrounds, including race, language, economics, gender, veterans, and disabilities.

**Status:** Passed the Senate

## Bill sought to limit consumer data used for setting automobile insurance rates

- This act would have prevented the consideration of an applicant's credit history in determining automobile insurance rates.

**Status:** Passed the Senate

## Tightening reporting requirements for candidates for public office

- This law requires candidates for public office to disclose more information upon filing a notice of organization with the Board of Elections.
- Candidates must now disclose the particular office they are seeking. Previously, some individuals would not complete this section of the form and would then raise money for multiple offices.
- Also, candidates must now file a financial disclosure form with the Ethics Commission within 30 days of filing a notice of organization.

**Status:** Signed Into Law

## Increasing voter access by removing literacy obstacles

- This law repeals a Rhode Island voting requirement that individuals who cannot sign their names must submit themselves to an interview by poll supervisors.
- Under the new law, voters whose voter registration cards have a mark rather than a signature may still use that mark to identify themselves, so long as they meet other voter identification requirements.

**Status:** Signed Into Law

## Increasing voter access by making it easier to identify yourself

- This law amends Rhode Island's existing voter identification law to include driver's licenses that have not been expired for more than six months.
- Rhode Island law previously required driver's licenses to be current, and voters were frequently turned away from polling places because their licenses had expired.
- More Rhode Islanders will retain their democratic right to vote because of this law.

**Status:** Signed Into Law

## Reducing burdensome requirements

- This law establishes that professional engineers who are registered and authorized to practice by the Rhode Island state board of registration for professional engineers be deemed to have met the qualifications for a designer's license of individual sewage disposal systems.
- Such engineers shall not be required to pass a written examination or to attend or enroll in continuing education programs as a requirement for the granting and renewal of such designer's licenses.

**Status:** Signed Into Law

## Enhancing public safety during road construction

- This law requires uniform standards for the use of steel plates on roadway surfaces during excavation.
- Utility companies and contractors will have to follow rules and regulations promulgated by the director of the Department of Transportation.
- This law was created in response to accidents involving pedestrians and motorists that had arisen from the faulty usage of steel plates in and around construction projects.

**Status:** Signed Into Law

## Creating one simple registration process for all municipalities

- This legislation would have required people who transact business under a trade name to register with a municipality, to provide more extensive information when filing, and to notify the municipality when the trade name is changed or discontinued.
- The bill would have further required the Secretary of State to keep an online register of all such certificates of registration for businesses.
- Currently, sole proprietorships operating under trade names must register within each city or town. This bill would have created one consistent process and an ability for data to be found online about companies doing business in municipalities.

**Status:** Passed the Senate



## Increasing competition among construction contractors by increasing vendor options

- This law applies to contractors who are awarded road and bridge construction projects by the Department of Transportation or contracts for the construction, improvement, completion, or repair of any public building when the contract price is in excess of \$150,000.
- Such contractors shall be required to furnish a contractor's bond equal to at least 50% of the contract price.
- The law increases the contract price required for such contractor's bonds from the current amount of \$50,000 in state law.
- This law places Rhode Island in line with federal requirements.
- An increase to the \$150,000 threshold may stimulate additional contracts for minority- and women-owned businesses, which frequently face difficulties getting such bonds.
- This law is intended to increase the vendor pool, which tends to decrease bid costs.

**Status:** Signed Into Law

## Senate fought for protections of renewable energy applicants

- This bill would have required electric distribution companies to provide an interconnecting, renewable power-generating customer with a detailed report of the actual costs of interconnecting to the power grid.
- It also would have required application reviews, with detailed information for power generators who are applying for interconnection. Such detail would have included a specific list of mistakes made in such applications and instructions on how to remedy them.
- This bill sought to correct a consumer issue that arises when an electric distribution company changes requirements for interconnection services after an application for the interconnection has been completed.
- It also worked to address another consumer complaint by preventing an electric distribution company from delaying a project for "third-party delays" when that third party is controlled by the electric distribution company

**Status:** Passed the Senate



# In the News

## Good Government and Public Infrastructure

### General Assembly passes changes to strengthen Hospital Conversions Act

PROVIDENCE – A bill passed by the General Assembly over the weekend amends the Hospital Conversions Act to increase oversight time for hospital conversions undertaken by both nonprofit and for-profit entities.

**Source** Providence Business News

**Date** July 1, 2019

**Author** PBN Staff

Previously, for-profits that acquired Rhode Island hospitals were subject to oversight for three years and faced fines of up to \$1 million for failure to comply with that scrutiny. Nonprofit combinations were not subject to those conditions.

Under the legislation, nonprofit conversions are subject to the same rules as those involving for-profit entities, but the scrutiny and fines have been increased. Going forward, any conversion will be subject to monitoring for five years, with failure to comply punishable by fines of up to \$2 million.

Continue Reading: <https://pbn.com/general-assembly-passes-changes-to-strengthen-hospital-conversion-act/>

### Rhode Island General Assembly passes religious pension bill

Rhode Island's general assembly has passed a bill that requires nongovernmental pension plans with 200 or more members that are not covered by the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) to comply with ERISA reporting requirements.

**Source** Chief Investment Officer

**Date** June 28, 2019

**Author** Michael Katz

The legislation is intended to close a loophole that prevented church pensions from having to provide financial information to plan members. The bill now goes to Gov. Gina Raimondo.

ERISA requires private pension plans to send members a letter each year outlining the health of their plan. However, pension plans administered by religious organizations are exempt from ERISA and Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) reporting standards. As a result, many members of so-called church plans complained they were often unable to access information regarding the financial health of their pensions.

Continue Reading: <https://www.ai-cio.com/news/rhode-island-general-assembly-passes-religious-pension-bill/>



# In the News

## Good Government and Public Infrastructure

### Rhode Island retailers must take cash under new law

Rhode Island has enacted a law ordering businesses to accept cash from customers, although the new law contains no fines or penalties.

**Source** Bloomberg Law

**Date** July 1, 2019

**Author** Aaron Nicodemus

Gov. Gina Raimondo (D) signed companion legislation (H 5116A/S 889) July 1, making it illegal for any retailer to require only credit and debit cards to purchase goods or services. The law, which takes effect immediately, does not apply to online sales.

“More and more retailers are shifting to cashless transactions in other parts of the country for various reasons,” said Rep. Mia Ackerman (D), one of the House bill’s sponsors.

Sen. William J. Conley Jr. (D) called credit-card only policies “discriminatory to the old, the young and the poor.”

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**Continue Reading:** <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/banking-law/rhode-island-retailers-must-take-cash-under-new-law>



# Press Releases

## Good Government and Public Infrastructure

### Senate Bill No. 189 Substitute A

### Requiring public utilities to repair roadways satisfactorily

**Date**

June 28, 2019

### **General Assembly passes Rhode Island Utility Fair Share Roadway Repair Act**

STATE HOUSE — The General Assembly has passed the Rhode Island Utility Fair Share Roadway Repair Act, which was introduced by Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) and Senate Majority Leader Michael J. McCaffrey (D-Dist. 29, Warwick).

The bill (2019-H 5028A, 2019-S 189A) would require public utilities to repave and repair roadways which have been altered or excavated by the public utility.

...

“The legislation would also provide a system to make certain that utility companies are complying with the law,” said Senator McCaffrey. “If it’s determined that the job was not done — or was not done satisfactorily — then the public utility administrator would charge an amount for reparation or repaving of the road. We want to hold public utilities accountable when they start tearing up public roads.”

...

[Available Online](#)



# Press Releases

## Good Government and Public Infrastructure

### Senate Bill No. 171 Substitute A

### Removing old and offensive language

**Date** July 1, 2019

### **Bill ensuring appropriate disability language in state job descriptions, regulations is signed into law**

STATE HOUSE — Legislation introduced by Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) and Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Newport, Tiverton, Little Compton) to ensure the use of appropriate disability language in state job descriptions and regulations has been signed into law by Gov. Gina Raimondo.

The law (2019-H 5289, 2019-S 171A) authorizes and empowers the personnel administrator to revise state job descriptions to incorporate the appropriate language. For instance, the term “mentally retarded” will be replaced with “intellectual and developmental disability.” The term “addict” will be replaced with “person with a substance use disorder.”

...

[Available Online](#)





# Rhode Island Senate

emphasizes

## Health Care and Social Services



@risenate



@RISenate



# Ensuring Women's Health Equity

## House Bill 5125 Substitute B

## Protecting a woman's right to reproductive health care

- 1 This law repeals state statutes regarding abortion that were ruled unconstitutional following *Roe v. Wade*, and it replaces them with a statutory framework that provides constitutional access to reproductive health care.
- 2 The new law allows for unfettered access to abortion prior to fetal viability, while only allowing for an abortion after fetal viability if it is necessary to preserve the life or health of the mother.
- 3 Physicians who perform post-viability abortions are required to record the medical reason in the patient's medical record, and any physician who knowingly violates the restriction on post-viability abortions may have his or her medical license suspended.
- 4 Under the new law, an individual may be charged with felony assault if he or she knowingly assaults a pregnant woman and the assault results in the termination of the fetus.

## STATUS

## Signed Into Law



“ It has been a long road to seeing this legislation passed, and I am proud of the bill that was passed by the General Assembly tonight. I thank Representative Williams, all of the cosponsors, and the advocates and supporters who worked tirelessly to ensure that a woman's right to privacy and proper reproductive health care is safe and accessible in Rhode Island.”

**Senator Erin Lynch Prata**  
Chairwoman of the Senate Committee on Judiciary

## State Budget, Article 5, Fiscal Year 2020

### Estimates indicate that ...

**248,813**

**Rhode Island females**

may benefit from this sales  
and use tax exemption.

**\$751,956**

**in sales and use tax**  
was paid in 2018, at 7% tax rate.

SOURCE: R.I. Budget Office analysis

## Eliminating the tax on feminine hygiene products

1

Originally, [Senate Bill No. 49](#) proposed eliminating the sales and use tax on feminine hygiene products. Ultimately, the tax exemption passed in the state budget.

2

This law excludes feminine hygiene products from Rhode Island's 7% sales tax.

3

Other states – including Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania – do not tax feminine hygiene products.

**STATUS**

**Signed Into Law**



## Senate Bill No. 445 Substitute A

## Prohibiting gender discrimination

1

This bill would have prohibited insurance companies in the individual or group markets from varying the premium rates charged for a health coverage plan based on gender.

2

The Affordable Care Act prohibits gender rating in individual and small group markets, and this bill would have expanded these protections to large group markets.

3

Other states – including Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, and Vermont – have banned gender rating.

**STATUS**

**Passed the Senate**



# Preserving Quality Health Care For All

## Senate Bill No. 738 Substitute A

### Protecting health insurance consumers

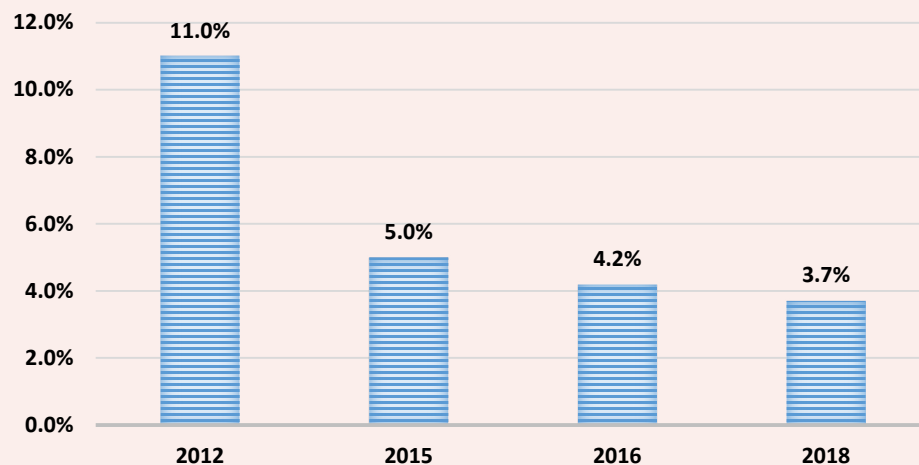
- 1 This bill would have enacted many provisions of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) into state law to protect consumers and to provide predictability to insurers, stabilizing the Rhode Island insurance market despite the undetermined future of the federal law.
- 2 The ACA has cut the uninsured rate in Rhode Island by two-thirds, and today, 96% of Rhode Islanders have health coverage. This bill would have protected coverage gains at the state level.
- 3 Consumer protections within this bill guarantee that:
  - Dependents up to age 26 can stay on a parent's plan;
  - Protections remain against excluding consumers with pre-existing conditions;
  - Essential benefits remain covered (preventive services, maternity, hospital, mental health, etc.);
  - Annual limits and lifetime dollar caps on coverage are prohibited for essential benefits;
  - Insurance premium rates will only vary by age (and not gender or health);
  - Coverage of preventive services exists without any patient cost-sharing; and
  - No one can be denied a policy, even if sick.

## STATUS

## Passed the Senate



### Uninsured Rate in Rhode Island



SOURCE: [HealthSource RI](#)

## Senate Bill No. 223

### Focusing on the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of Alzheimer's disease

- 1 This law requires the Department of Health to develop and implement an assessment of all state programs that address Alzheimer's disease.
- 2 The law creates a 13-member Advisory Council on Alzheimer's Disease Research and Treatment, which will produce an annual report.
- 3 All doctors and nurses must now complete a one-time training course on Alzheimer's disease and dementia. Health care facilities must implement an Alzheimer's disease and dementia operational plan.

**23,000**

people aged

**65 and older**

are living with

**Alzheimer's in**

**Rhode Island**



SOURCE: [Alzheimer's Association](#)

## STATUS

## Signed Into Law



## Senate Bill No. 24

### Addressing health care needs with supportive housing

- 1 This bill would have required the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to study the impact of declaring homelessness as a medical condition that negatively affects an individual's health and well-being.
- 2 The state would have used federal waivers to provide Medicaid coverage for treatment of homelessness, ensuring that individuals have access to housing and supportive housing services.
- 3 This bill was modeled after a successful pilot program in Hawaii, where health care costs per client per month decreased by 76%, resulting in a net savings of \$4,247 per month per client.

## STATUS

## Passed the Senate





# Ensuring Children's Health and Welfare

## Senate Bill No. 789 as amended

### Ensuring equality in Rhode Island's parentage laws

- 1 This bill would have repealed the state's antiquated paternity statutes and would have replaced them with a comprehensive statutory framework that is more inclusive of parental rights.
- 2 Rhode Island's decades-old laws did not take into account future medical advances that have since resulted in alternative options for parentage, such as surrogacy and assisted reproduction.
- 3 Consequently, this bill would have recognized such alternative options and increasingly diverse family structures, to ensure all children have appropriate parentage immediately following birth.

**STATUS**

**Passed the Senate**



## Senate Bill No. 572 Substitute A

### Improving children's dental health

- 1 This law will improve access to dental screenings for school children by allowing licensed public health dental hygienists to perform dental screenings in kindergarten, third grade, and ninth grade. Previously, only licensed dentists were permitted to perform dental screenings in schools.
- 2 Tooth decay is the most common chronic disease among children and has negative impacts on their overall health, growth and development, school attendance, and academic achievement.
- 3 Children living in poverty are more likely to have untreated tooth decay than their higher-income peers. This law will help address this disparity and the overall prevalence of tooth decay in children.

**STATUS**

**Signed Into Law**



**Senate Bill No. 574**  
**Substitute A**

**Creating multi-disciplinary teams  
to foster child and maternal health**

- 1** This law establishes a multi-disciplinary Maternal Mortality Review Committee to examine maternal deaths that occur during pregnancy and up to one year post-pregnancy.
- 2** State officials are directed to work with specialists from each hospital to develop findings and recommendations for preventing maternal deaths.
- 3** The work product of the Maternal Mortality Review Committee shall remain confidential.

**STATUS**

**Signed Into Law**



**Pregnancy-related deaths\***  
**in the United States increased from:**

**7.2 deaths in 1987**  
to  
**17.2 deaths in 2015**

\*per 100,000 live births

**Black women are  
3 to 4 times  
more likely  
to die from  
pregnancy-related  
causes than  
white women.**

**SOURCE:** Data from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov)

## Appendix: Health Care and Social Services

### Senate Bill No. 678 as amended

#### **Supporting pregnant women and babies**

- This bill would have required that Medicaid and private health insurance companies provide coverage for doula services.
- A doula is a trained professional who provides continuous physical, emotional, and informational support to a pregnant woman throughout pregnancy and up to the first 12 months of postpartum.
- Studies show that doulas improve health outcomes for both the mother and baby.

**Status:** Passed the Senate

### Senate Bill No. 299

#### **Increasing access to prenatal care**

- This bill would have ensured that pregnant women have early access to prenatal care.
- Pregnant women with an income above the current Medicaid income limit and up to 400% of the federal poverty level would have been allowed to purchase a Medicaid managed care plan.
- The goals of the proposed program included timely enrollment, ease of payment, and prompt transfer to another available insurance plan once the baby is born.

**Status:** Passed the Senate

### Senate Bill No. 773 Substitute A as amended

#### **Guarding patients against life-threatening sepsis**

- This bill would have required that the Department of Health develop evidence-based sepsis protocols by February of 2020 and that hospitals implement these protocols one year later.
- Sepsis is the body's extreme response to an infection and is a life-threatening medical emergency. Without timely treatment, sepsis can rapidly lead to tissue damage, organ failure, and death.
- Sepsis is extremely prevalent, which is why protections like those provided in this bill are necessary. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in three patients who dies in a hospital has sepsis.

**Status:** Passed the Senate

## Protecting patients' private health care information

- This resolution asks that the Department of Health develop and implement rules and regulations to ensure the confidential communication of sensitive medical information by January of 2020.
- Patient information may be exposed because health insurers sometimes send an Explanation of Benefits, which details medical services received by a patient, to the primary policyholder instead of to the dependent who received the care.
- Patients may delay or completely avoid getting sensitive medical screenings or treatments, for fear of their medical information being exposed. This resolution aims to remedy this issue.

**Status:** Resolution Was Enacted

## Safeguarding Rhode Islanders and the public health of the state

- This law expands the childhood immunization registry to all people, creating the Rhode Island Child and Adult Immunization Registry.
- Prior to this bill passing, Rhode Island was one of only two states in the country that did not have the authority to establish a lifelong immunization registry.
- At a time when vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks have increased across the country, an adult registry is a critical and necessary public health tool to keep our state safe.
- The registry will only include data endorsed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and all personally identifiable information will be confidential. Anyone can opt out of the registry by contacting the Department of Health.

**Status:** Signed Into Law



# In the News

## Health Care and Social Services

### On the future of maternal mortality review in Rhode Island

The United States has the highest reported number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, or maternal mortality ratio (MMR), among high-resource countries and recent trends suggest it has increased by over 26% since 2000.

Global trends reported by the World Health Organization (WHO) demonstrate that pregnant women in the U.S. face a mortality ratio that is at least four times higher than leading European countries and in 2014, the U.S. ranked 47th globally in maternal mortality.

The most recent CDC estimates report a national pregnancy-related ratio of 17.3 deaths per 100,000 live births. According to the Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis, the 2013–2017 maternal mortality rate was 11.2 deaths per 100,000 live births.

**Source** Rhode Island Medical Journal

**Date** October of 2018

**Author** Doctors Bridget Spelke, Sebastian Ramos, Hope Yu, Michael Cohen, and Tanya L. Booker

**Continue Reading:** <http://www.rimed.org/rimedicaljournal/2018/10/2018-10-34-obgyn-spelke.pdf>

### New state budget eliminates ‘tampon tax’ in Rhode Island

Rhode Island women will no longer have to pay sales tax on period products. Under the new state budget, approved by the House of Representatives in a rare Saturday morning session, pads, tampons and other feminine hygiene products will be exempt from Rhode Island’s sales tax starting with the new fiscal year.

**Source** Patch

**Date** June 23, 2019

**Author** Rachel Nunes

The new state budget includes a proposal from Representative Edith Ajello and Senator Louis DiPalma, who introduced independent legislation calling for the tax exemption earlier this year.

...

“Rhode Island should not be taxing feminine hygiene products as if buying them is some kind of luxury that indicates a person’s ability to pitch in a little more to support the state. They are a necessity, and one that is already fairly expensive for those of limited means. You can’t buy them with SNAP, and many women and girls can’t afford as many as they actually need,” East Bay Senator DiPalma said. “The state doesn’t need to add to their costs. For the same reason we exempt food and clothing — necessity — we should exempt menstrual products, and I’m very pleased that now our state will.”

**Continue Reading:** <https://patch.com/rhode-island/newport/new-state-budget-eliminates-tampon-tax-rhode-island>





# In the News

## Health Care and Social Services

### Governor signs abortion rights bill into law following House, Senate approval

PROVIDENCE — State lawmakers on Wednesday passed, and Gov. Gina Raimondo moments later signed into law, legislation to preserve “the status quo” on abortion in Rhode Island, no matter what the future holds for the historic *Roe v. Wade* ruling.

**Source** The Providence Journal

**Date** June 19, 2019

**Author** Katherine Gregg and  
Patrick Anderson

As defined in the new state law, the status quo means: abortions are allowed up until the point a fetus could live outside the womb. An abortion would only be allowed later “when necessary to preserve the health or life” of the pregnant woman.

Inking her signature to what she called a “very important and consequential bill,” Democrat Raimondo said: “Fundamentally, this bill is about health care. It’s about protecting and providing access to health care for all the women of Rhode Island.”

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**Continue Reading:** <https://www.providencejournal.com/news/20190619/governor-signs-abortion-rights-bill-into-law-following-house-senate-approval>

### Same-sex couples dismayed as parentage law stalls R.I. House

PROVIDENCE — Ellen Tuzzolo and Jessie Justin moved to Rhode Island from upstate New York in 2013 with the intention to raise a family in a state they considered culturally diverse.

**Source** The Providence Journal

**Date** June 28, 2019

**Author** Katie Mulvaney

They got married, bought a house on Miller Avenue, and set about trying to start a family.

“We wanted to live in a state that we thought would be supportive of who we are,” Tuzzolo said.

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**Continue Reading:** <https://www.providencejournal.com/news/20190628/same-sex-couples-dismayed-as-parentage-law-stalls-in-ri-house>







# Rhode Island Senate

protects

## Natural Resources and the Environment



@risenate



@RISenate



# Celebrating R.I.'s No. 1 Ranking

## Senate Resolution No. 1020

### R.I. Senate recognizes the chief stewards of the state's natural resources

- 1 In May, U.S. News & World Report ranked Rhode Island as the top state in the nation for its natural environment. The Senate celebrated the ranking with a resolution.
- 2 The Senate noted that the Department of Environmental Management serves as the chief steward of the state's natural resources and works tirelessly with myriad partners.
- 3 The resolution further noted that the Coastal Resources Management Council, the Audubon Society of Rhode Island, and the Narragansett Bay Commission work diligently with state leaders and Rhode Island's Congressional delegation on efforts to restore the state's lands and waters; to conserve wildlife and marine resources; and to monitor environmental quality in order to build healthy, more resilient communities.

**STATUS**

**Resolution Was Enacted**



**The Ocean State  
is an  
environmental treasure  
whose  
quality of life  
has long been a priority  
for the  
Rhode Island Senate.**

## Top 5 States

- |   |   |               |
|---|---|---------------|
| 1 |  | Rhode Island  |
| 2 |  | South Dakota  |
| 3 |  | Minnesota     |
| 4 |  | New Hampshire |
| 5 |  | California    |

The [U.S. News & World Report](#) ranking considered air and water quality and pollution levels across the country.

# Assisting Farmers and Municipalities

## Senate Resolution No. 761

### Senate continues strong support for farmers

- 1 This Senate resolution urges Congress to ask the U.S. Food & Drug Administration to work with farmers in order to ensure that the federal Produce Safety rule is followed and that regulations do not go beyond requirements of the federal Food Safety Modernization Act.
- 2 Certain produce is exempt from the federal Produce Safety rule, which is found in the Food Safety Modernization Act, including produce used strictly for animal feed.
- 3 However, FDA regulations go beyond the law and require farmers to include that exempted produce in their accounting practices. Consequently, those regulations force some legally exempted farmers to comply with strict restrictions.
- 4 This resolution asks Congress to correct this regulatory error.

**STATUS**

**Resolution Was Enacted**



## Senate Bill No. 661 Substitute A

### Bill sought comprehensive solar energy siting ordinances by municipalities

- 1 This bill would have required each municipality to adopt comprehensive solar siting ordinances that abide by state building codes, fire codes, and laws by April 30, 2020.
- 2 The Office of Energy Resources and the Division of Statewide Planning would have been required to provide “technical assistance to municipalities” to ensure compliance with codes and laws and to help any municipality seeking technical assistance.

**STATUS**

**Passed the Senate**





# Preserving Land and Water

## Senate Bill No. 410 Substitute A as amended

### Senate sought strong plastic bag ban

1

This bill would have prohibited retail sales establishments from using single-use plastic checkout bags and non-recyclable paper checkout bags. It would have superseded all state and local laws and ordinances to ensure statewide uniformity.

2

The bill exempted farmers' markets, yard sales, nonprofit organizations' sales, and several other venues. It also encouraged retailers to make reusable carryout bags with stitched handles available to the public and to assist low-income households "to the greatest degree possible."

## Senate Bill No. 202 Substitute A

### Senate worked to ban plastic straws

1

This legislation would have prohibited food service establishments from providing customers with single-use plastic straws, unless a customer asked for one or selected one from a self-service dispenser.

2

Penalties would have included a warning for the first two violations and \$25 for each violation thereafter, up to \$300 annually.

## STATUS

## Passed the Senate



# 8 million

metric tons of plastic  
enter the oceans every year

Volunteers collected more than

# 3.7 million

plastic straws and stirrers during the 2018 International Coastal Cleanup

SOURCES: [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#); [Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup Report](#)

# Appendix: Natural Resources and the Environment

## Senate Bill No. 906

### Extending air-quality monitoring near state airport

- This law extends the air-quality monitoring program at T.F. Green Airport for another two years, until July 31, 2021.
- The study must include data from monitors placed in specific residential and recreational areas adjacent to the airport.
- The study's sunset date is contingent upon the Rhode Island Airport Corporation undertaking and completing certain actions detailed in the statute.

**Status:** Signed Into Law

## Senate Bill No. 760 Substitute A

### Senate sought expansion of renewable energy projects

- This bill would have helped Rhode Island move closer to its clean energy goals. The bill sought to open up the net metering of renewable energy to “multiple party collaboratives” and industrial and commercial businesses, effective on April 1, 2020.
- In net metering, renewable energy generators, such as solar panels and wind turbines, are connected to the power grid to offset the generating customer's bills. Any surplus power created by a customer's renewable energy generator is then transferred to other customers.
- In addition, this legislation would have added another 30 megawatts to the total amount of net metering systems that can be built in Rhode Island. Currently, the total allowed is 30 megawatts – an amount already committed to renewable projects being built around the state.
- Thirty megawatts of power is enough to provide electricity to approximately 20,000 homes.

**Status:** Passed the Senate

## Senate Bill No. 395 Substitute A

### Supporting R.I. businesses to meet global sustainability efforts

- This bill enables companies to create standards that may guide their business activities in a sustainable and responsible manner and allow them to demonstrate their corporate commitment to social responsibility.
- The Secretary of State will certify companies that have adopted transparency and sustainability standards if the Secretary of State determines the businesses have met requirements in the law.

**Status:** Signed Into Law



# In the News

## Natural Resources and the Environment

### Natural Environment Rankings: Measuring the quality of states' natural amenities

Policymakers have implemented a number of regulations over the past half-century to ensure a safe relationship between people and their environment. Under the Clean Air Act, the Environmental Protection Agency regulates air pollution. Similarly, the Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act ensure that states properly dispose of pollutants at treatment plants and that public drinking water meets federal standards.

**Source** U.S. News & World Report

**Date** May of 2019

**Author** Staff

These laws not only help preserve the nation's natural resources, but they protect the public from harmful toxins and resulting health concerns.

Rhode Island is the top state for natural environment. It's followed by South Dakota, Minnesota, New Hampshire and California to round out the top five. Three of the 10 states with the best natural environments also rank among the top 10 Best States overall.

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**Continue Reading:** <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/rankings/natural-environment>

### Raimondo signs law extending air monitoring at T.F. Green Airport

PROVIDENCE, RI — Gov. Gina Raimondo recently signed legislation introduced by Warwick Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19) and Senate Majority Leader Michael J. McCaffrey (D-Dist. 29) that extends the air quality monitoring program at T.F. Green Airport.

**Source** Warwick Post

**Date** July 18, 2019

**Author** Joe Hutnak

The law extends the program for two years to July 31, 2021, and allows the law to sunset if Rhode Island Airport Corporation (RIAC) takes specific actions for the collection and reporting of air quality data from monitors set up around the airport. RIAC began monitoring for pollutants in early 2008 under a plan developed with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management and the Department of Health.

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**Continue Reading:** <https://warwickpost.com/raimondo-signs-law-extending-air-monitoring-at-tf-green-airport/>



# Press Releases

## Natural Resources and the Environment

### Senate Bill No. 906

### Extended program seeks to determine public health impact of air pollutants

**Date**

July 2, 2019

### **General Assembly passes bill extending T.F. Green Airport air quality monitoring program**

STATE HOUSE — The General Assembly has passed legislation introduced by Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) and Senate Majority Leader Michael J. McCaffrey (D-Dist. 29, Warwick) that would extend the air quality monitoring program at T.F. Green Airport.

The bill (2019-H 5672A, 2019-S 0906) would extend the required air quality monitoring program at the airport for two years to July 31, 2021.

...

“This law was first passed in order to monitor the air quality around T.F. Green Airport,” said Representative McNamara, who serves as chairman of the House Committee on Health, Education and Welfare. “Two years ago we changed the location of air monitoring sites. In addition to the quarterly reports, the bill will require the Airport Corporation to compile at least 20 months of 9 complete air quality monitoring data from these monitors and submit that data to the Department of Health.”

The law calls for long-term air monitoring at four sites located near T.F. Green Airport to determine the impact of air pollutants, which may be harmful to public health on the densely populated, primarily residential area of the city of Warwick that surrounds the airport.

“The original playing fields were moved by the Airport Corporation to make room for the new runway extension,” said Senator McCaffrey. “Since jet engines can have a particularly adverse effect on young children, it was imperative that we test the quality of the air at the park that runs adjacent to the runway. The citizens of Warwick have a right to know how air quality is being affected by jet engines taking off and landing at T.F. Green Airport.”

...

[Available Online](#)







# Rhode Island Senate

believes in

## Protecting Public Welfare



@risenate



@RISenate



# Protecting Rhode Islanders

## Senate Bill No. 315 Substitute A as amended

## Extending the statute of limitations for cases of child sexual abuse

- 1 This law extends the statute of limitations for cases of childhood sexual abuse to 35 years.
- 2 The previous statute of limitations for bringing civil suits against perpetrators of sexual assaults was 7 years, while the statute of limitations for claims against organizations for negligent supervision was 3 years.
- 3 This law increases the statute of limitations for all civil suits arising from claims of sexual assaults to 35 years, regardless of whether they are brought against a perpetrator or an employer.
- 4 Municipalities and state institutions were exempt under previous drafts of the legislation. However, in the wake of troubling childhood sexual abuse scandals, the Senate fought to include public institutions among those that can be sued for damages.

**STATUS**

**Signed Into Law**



“ The average age of disclosure is 52. That is an important statistic. We need this 35-year extension. It’s one in four girls and one in six boys who will be sexually abused by the time they are 18.”

**Peg Langhammer, Executive Director of Day One**  
Testimony before the Senate Committee on Judiciary, March 12, 2019

## State Budget, Article 2, Fiscal Year 2020

### Dedicated funding for the E-911 system

1

The state budget significantly reconfigures telecommunication surcharges to ensure dedicated and sufficient funding for the E-911 system.

2

Legislators appropriated \$222,000 in Fiscal Year 2020 to fund skills training for E-911 Telecommunicators in the area of emergency medical dispatch and other emergency response procedures.



**STATUS**

**Signed Into Law**



## Senate Bill No. 321 Substitute A

### Protecting children from domestic abuse

1

This act closes a loophole in the law related to the children included in domestic abuse restraining orders and is intended to speed up the process of protecting all minors from domestic abuse.

2

Previously, a plaintiff seeking a domestic abuse restraining order in Family Court would have had to obtain a separate protective order in District or Superior Court for any of his or her children who were not related to the defendant by blood or marriage.

3

This law allows all of a plaintiff's children to be included in the same Family Court protective order, regardless of the relationship the children have with the defendant.

**STATUS**

**Signed Into Law**



# Protecting R.I. Animals

## Senate Bill No. 225

Providing for the safety and welfare of animals during domestic disputes

1 This law expands the jurisdiction of Family Court to ensure that household pets are taken into consideration during instances of domestic abuse and are included in protective orders for victims.

2 Family Court judges now have the authority to award custody of household pets to plaintiffs and to initiate protective orders to ensure their safety and welfare.



2018 ranking of animal protection laws

SOURCE: Animal Legal Defense Fund

STATUS

Signed Into Law



## Senate Bill No. 699 Substitute B

Strengthening animal welfare regulations in R.I.

1 This law increases inspection and reporting requirements for pet shops and allows them to obtain puppies and kittens from rescues and shelters.

2 Pet stores will now have to obtain inspection reports from licensed veterinarians for each cat and dog offered for sale and to provide the reports to the Department of Environmental Management.

3 The new law also criminalizes roadside and outdoor markets for cats and dogs by prohibiting individuals from selling such animals in public places.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



## **Senate Bill No. 308** **Substitute A**

## **Prohibiting the misrepresentation of service animals**

**1** This law updates the definition of a “service animal” and prohibits the misrepresentation of an animal as a service animal in places where pets are otherwise not permitted.

**2** State law already recognizes the important role of service animals in helping people with disabilities. However, in some unfortunate incidents, people have misrepresented pets as service animals, thereby compromising the legitimacy of this program.

**3** The updated definitions in this law are intended to help business owners manage this issue, to protect the rights of those who use service animals, and to penalize people who misrepresent the status of their pets.



## **STATUS**

## **Signed Into Law**



“ People who aren’t disabled who are trying to get the same rights for themselves that are granted to disabled people are taking unfair advantage of these exceptions, and shouldn’t be undermining their purpose. This bill is meant as a deterrent to discourage people from abusing service animal laws.”

**Senator Roger A. Picard**

Lead sponsor of the bill

Channel 12 WPRI-TV, June 26, 2019



# Ensuring Public Safety

## Senate Bill No. 84 Substitute A as amended

## Prohibiting 3-D printed guns, ghost guns, and undetectable firearms

1 This bill would have prohibited the possession of firearms manufactured through a 3-D printing process and those that lack unique serial numbers as required by the Federal Gun Control Act of 1968.

2 Under this proposal, any person who manufactured, sold, transferred, or possessed a ghost gun or an undetectable firearm would have been guilty of a felony.

3 “Ghost Guns” already pose a public safety threat in Rhode Island. Last year, a Cranston man was arrested and charged with manufacturing and selling a “ghost” machine gun to an undercover federal agent.

**The U.S. Bureau of Alcohol,  
Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives  
announced a Cranston man’s  
arrest last year.**

Court documents indicated that he:

- **Manufactured “ghost guns,” including machine guns, from parts and**
- **Sought a buyer for a \$4,000 machine gun.**



**U.S. Department of Justice**  
December 12, 2018

## STATUS

## Passed the Senate



“ As we struggle to fight the gun epidemic in this country and try to improve our efforts to prevent children, criminals, and the mentally ill from possessing firearms, we must not tolerate attempts to subvert our laws by making guns untraceable or undetectable. Serial numbers, background checks, and metal detectors help prevent tragedies, and our laws should be clear that no one should be trying to get around them to engage in criminal activity.”

**Senator Cynthia A. Coyne**  
Lead sponsor of the bill  
Channel 12 WPRI-TV, June 6, 2019



# In the News

## Protecting Public Welfare

### R.I. lawmakers pass bill giving sexual abuse victims 35 years to bring lawsuits

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — The Rhode Island General Assembly overwhelmingly passed legislation on Wednesday to give victims of childhood sexual abuse more time to sue perpetrators and hold institutions and public entities accountable.

**Source** The Boston Globe

**Date** June 26, 2019

**Author** Amanda Milkovits

The legislation heads to the desk of Governor Gina Raimondo, who is expected to sign it into law.

It extends the statute of limitations to 35 years after victims reach adulthood.

Victims will have 35 years to bring lawsuits against individual perpetrators, regardless of whether the case had been “time-barred” under previous laws. The bill also keeps state law allowing victims to file suits within seven years of “discovering” they’d been abused.

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**Continue Reading:** <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/rhode-island/2019/06/26/rhode-island-lawmakers-pass-bill-giving-sexual-abuse-victims-years-bring-lawsuits/KVFDNvZBoJ5dsRfa95seiP/story.html>

### One cardiac arrest, four 911 callers, and a tragic outcome

CUMBERLAND — When Rena Fleury collapsed in the stands during her son’s high school football game last August, there was reason to be hopeful.

**Source** The Boston Globe and The Public’s Radio

**Date** June 4, 2019

**Author** Lynn Arditi

At 45, she was on the young side for a cardiac arrest, which improved her odds of surviving. And she was in a public place, which, studies show, also increased her chances. Plus, she was in Cumberland, a “heart safe” community where emergency medical personnel are among the most highly trained in the state.

But despite four 911 emergency calls from people in the stands, two nearby automated external defibrillators, and bystanders who tried to help, Fleury didn’t make it.

The 911 call-takers failed to recognize that Fleury was having a cardiac arrest. And they failed to provide CPR instructions over the phone.

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**Continue Reading:** [https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/rhode-island/2019/06/04/one-cardiac-arrest-four-callers-and-tragic-outcome/5qSs538I6trCXEEG5GORaL/story.html?p1=HP\\_Feed\\_ContentQuery](https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/rhode-island/2019/06/04/one-cardiac-arrest-four-callers-and-tragic-outcome/5qSs538I6trCXEEG5GORaL/story.html?p1=HP_Feed_ContentQuery)



# In the News

## Protecting Public Welfare

### Senate passes bill outlawing 3D-printed guns, 'ghost guns'

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (WPRI) — The Senate passed a bill Wednesday banning 3D-printed firearms and so-called “ghost guns.”

**Source** Channel 12 WPRI-TV

**Date** June 6, 2019

**Author** Neil Remiesiewicz

The bill, sponsored by Senator Cynthia Coyne, would make it illegal to manufacture, buy, sell or possess a 3D-printed firearm or any firearm made from plastic or fiberglass.

Guns without serial numbers, often termed “ghost guns,” would also be banned. The bill would also outlaw any firearm that can’t be detected by a metal detector.

“As we struggle to fight the gun epidemic in this country and try to improve our efforts to prevent children, criminals and the mentally ill from possessing firearms, we must not tolerate attempts to subvert our laws by making guns untraceable or undetectable,” Coyne said in a statement. “Serial numbers, background checks and metal detectors help prevent tragedies, and our laws should be clear that no one should be trying to get around them to engage in criminal activity.”

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**Continue Reading:** <https://www.wpri.com/news/local-news/providence/senate-passes-bill-outlawing-3d-printed-guns-ghost-guns/>

### R.I. Senate approves bill to protect animals in domestic abuse cases

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (WJAR) — The Rhode Island Senate has given the green light on legislation that would protect pets involved in animal abuse cases.

**Source** Channel 10 WJAR-TV

**Date** June 5, 2019

**Author** Staff

The legislation, which passed the Senate on Wednesday and now moves to the House of Representatives for approval, would expand Family Court jurisdiction to enter protective orders to provide for the safety and welfare of household pets in domestic abuse situations.

“There is a strong correlation between domestic abuse and animal abuse,” Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio, a Democrat who represents North Providence and Providence, noted in a press release. “If someone is violent towards humans they are likely to be violent towards animals. This legislation will ensure pets are protected under the law from domestic abusers, just as humans are.”

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**Continue Reading:** <https://turnto10.com/politics/ri-senate-approves-bill-to-protect-animals-in-domestic-abuse-cases>



# Press Releases

## Protecting Public Welfare

### Senate Bill No. 321 Substitute A

### Protecting Rhode Island Children

**Date**

July 2, 2019

### **New law allows domestic violence protective orders to help more children**

STATE HOUSE – The governor has signed into law legislation approved by the General Assembly to allow domestic violence protective orders to protect more children in families.

The bill (2019-S 0321A, 2019-H 5489A), sponsored by Senate Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin and House Deputy Majority Whip Christopher R. Blazejewski, will allow domestic violence protective orders sought in Family Court to include any children of the plaintiff who aren't related to the defendant.

Currently, such protective orders cover only the common children of the plaintiff and the defendant. In order to also protect children who are not related to the defendant by blood or marriage, the plaintiff has to get a separate order in District or Superior Court.

"Protective orders are needed swiftly. Victims and potential victims need protection right away, and shouldn't have to go to two separate courts to get orders to protect their children. All the kids in a family deserve protection, and this bill recognizes that reality," said Senator Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence).

...

[Available Online](#)



# Press Releases

## Protecting Public Welfare

### Senate Bill No. 308 Substitute A

### Discouraging abuse of service animal laws

**Date** June 26, 2019

#### **Assembly passes bill aimed at preventing service animal misrepresentation**

STATE HOUSE – The General Assembly today approved legislation to prevent the misrepresentation of pets as service animals. The bill now goes to the governor.

The legislation (2019-S 0308A, 2019-H 5299aa), sponsored by Sen. Roger A. Picard and Rep. Bernard A. Hawkins, prevents owners from misrepresenting a pet as a service animal in order to gain access to rights or privileges reserved for disabled individuals with service animals.

“Service animals are highly trained at great expense, and they provide potentially life-saving assistance to the people they serve. ... People who aren’t disabled who are trying to get the same rights for themselves that are granted to disabled people are taking unfair advantage of these exceptions, and shouldn’t be undermining their purpose. They are also putting business owners like restaurant operators in an uncomfortable position, because they have a duty to follow health codes that don’t allow animals unless they are real service animals in order to keep their patrons safe and their facilities clean. This bill is meant as a deterrent to discourage people from abusing service animal laws,” said Senator Picard (D-Dist. 20, Woonsocket, Cumberland).

...

[Available Online](#)





# Rhode Island Senate

enhances

Quality of Life  
and Workforce  
Prosperity



@risenate



@RISenate



# Improving Living Conditions in R.I.

## State Budget, Fiscal Year 2020

## Helping Rhode Islanders remain in their own homes

1

Lawmakers allocated nearly \$500,000 for the Rhode Island Livable Home Modification Act, which awards grants of up to \$5,000 to eligible homeowners and renters to help retrofit their residences to nationally recognized accessibility standards.

2

The purpose of the program is to allow seniors and individuals with disabilities to remain safely and independently at home and out of long-term-care facilities, while reducing falls and other related emergency room, hospital, and/or rehabilitation expenses.

3

Senate Bill No. 147 Substitute A sought to make this program permanent. Although that bill passed the Senate, funding for the program was instead included in this year's budget at about the same amount as in the prior fiscal year.



AARP-Rhode Island State Director Kathleen S. Connell thanks Senator Walter S. Felag Jr. with the organization's Capitol Caregiver Award for his leadership in creating this program.

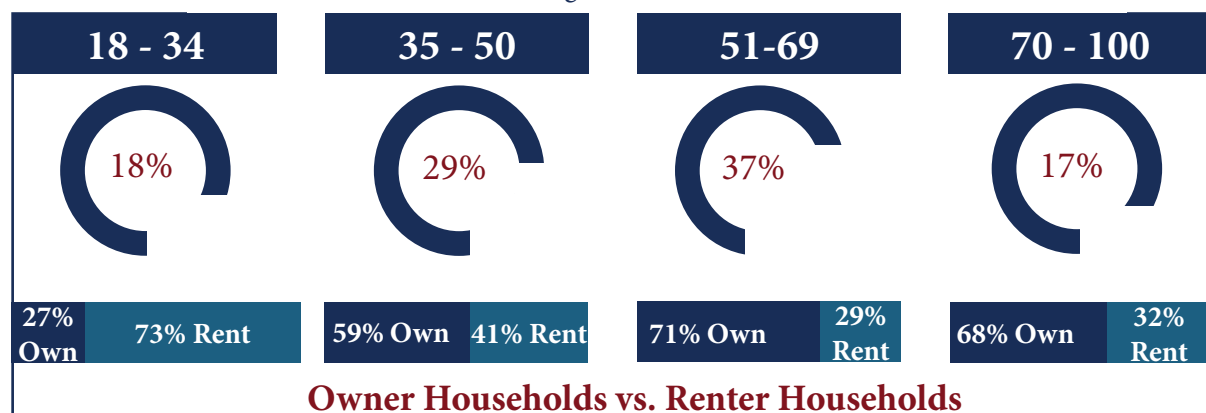
## STATUS

## Signed Into Law



### Share of Rhode Island Households by Generation

(Age in 2016)



SOURCE: [HousingWorksRI 2018](#)

## Senate Bill No. 302 Substitute A

## Keeping families intact despite the health needs of those with dementia

### Quick Facts about Alzheimer's

**6th leading cause**  
of death in the U.S.

**Every 65 seconds in the U.S.**  
someone develops the disease

**More than 16 million Americans**  
provide unpaid care for people with  
Alzheimer's or other dementias

SOURCE: Data from [Alzheimer's Association](#)

1

This law allows spouses or partners of patients in Alzheimer's or dementia special care units to live with them, even if the partners do not meet requirements to become patients.

2

This policy enables couples to stay together, and it is an important step toward supporting some of Rhode Island's most vulnerable residents.

3

Alzheimer's is extremely prevalent. Currently, 5.8 million Americans are living with the disease, and that number is projected to rise to nearly 14 million by 2050.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



## Senate Bill No. 27 Substitute A

## Enhancing donations to food banks, shelters, and other organizations

1 This law repeals the state's antiquated food donation statute and instead maximizes allowable donations to food banks, homeless shelters, and other charitable organizations that provide food to people in need.

2 Individuals, farmers, restaurants, and other entities that donate unused food will be held harmless.

3 By providing more comprehensive immunity provisions, this law has the potential to reduce fears associated with donating food and would hopefully lead to increased food donations, the Rhode Island Food Dealers Association said in written testimony to the Senate Committee on Judiciary.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



# Improving Living Conditions in R.I.

## Senate Bill No. 294

## Supporting Rhode Island's family/informal caregivers

1 This law helps support family/informal caregivers, who are a crucial part of the state's long-term care services and support system.

2 The law requires the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to publish annual reports regarding the number of caregiver assessments that have been conducted so caregiver needs are understood and so that education and training for them may be developed.

Unpaid family/informal care  
provided in Rhode Island

**124 million hours  
valued at \$1.8 billion**

SOURCE: "Valuing the Invaluable," AARP 2015 report

**STATUS**

**Signed Into Law**



## State Budget, Article 8, Fiscal Year 2020

## Ensuring permanent free bus passes for Rhode Islanders in need

**\$5 million  
each year**  
from the  
Highway Maintenance Funds  
**To pay for free bus passes**

1 Lawmakers eliminated a sunset provision in the budget for a program that provides free bus passes to low-income seniors and to Rhode Islanders with disabilities.

2 This budget decision was intended to make the free bus pass program permanent.

**STATUS**

**Signed Into Law**



# Honoring R.I. Veterans

## Senate Bill No. 837

### Senate works to restore honor to the discharge process for veterans

1

This act allows a service member who has received a discharge status of less-than-honorable strictly because of sexual orientation or gender identity or expression to petition the state's Office of Veterans Affairs to record the discharge status as honorable.

2

An honorable discharge then allows that service member to access all municipal and state-of-ferred benefits and privileges that are offered to those who have received honorable discharges. Those benefits include housing and employment assistance.



## STATUS

## Signed Into Law



## Senate Bill No. 151

### Senate sought property tax relief for Rhode Island's veterans

1

This act would have amended the definition of "disabled" for the purposes of property tax relief, to include veterans who earn less than \$30,000 annually and who receive disability benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

2

"Veterans" was defined as individuals who have served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces and who have received an honorable discharge.

## STATUS

## Passed the Senate





# Ensuring Workforce Prosperity

## Senate Bill No. 698 Substitute A

### Empowering workers to compete in today's job market

1

This law bans the enforcement of non-competition agreements in Rhode Island for low-wage employees, employees aged 18 or younger, college students, and non-exempt employees under the Fair Labor Standards Act, such as hourly workers.

2

This aims to protect Rhode Island's most vulnerable workers from restrictive contracts with current employers that hamper their ability to find better employment opportunities.



## STATUS

## Signed Into Law



## Senate Bill No. 253 Substitute A

### Informing employees about workers' cooperatives

1

The Local Ownership Opportunity Act provides affected employees an opportunity to purchase a business that employs them when it is in danger of being sold or going out of business.

2

The Department of Labor and Training shall inform affected employees about their rights to furnish a bid to purchase the business and to form a workers' cooperative.

3

Such cooperatives are democratically controlled enterprises operated by a company's own workers.

## STATUS

## Signed Into Law



## Appendix: Quality of Life and Workforce Prosperity

### Senate Bill No. 509

#### Senate continues the battle against wage discrimination

- At a time when women continue to earn less than men earn for substantially similar work, the Senate has prioritized closing gender pay gaps and pay gaps that exist for workers in other protected classes.
- This bill would have replaced the state’s “equal work” standard with a “comparable work” standard, a change that at least 10 states have enacted in recent years, including Massachusetts.
- The bill would have banned employers from asking prospective employees their wage histories, and it would have required employers to provide wage ranges to applicants before discussion of wages began, or upon request.

**Status:** Passed the Senate

### Senate Bill No. 305

#### Increasing communication access for individuals who are deaf

- This law allows state employees to work after hours as interpreters or as communication access realtime translation (CART) providers for the state, helping state agencies carry out their federal obligation to provide communication access for individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing.
- Many state agencies – including the Department of Children, Youth & Families and the State Police – need to be able to provide such communication services after hours.
- Currently, only two legally certified interpreters live in Rhode Island and can serve the court system. This law is intended to increase access to interpreters.

**Status:** Signed Into Law

### Senate Bill No. 109 Substitute A

#### Assisting minority businesses by reducing burdensome registration requirements

- This act allows any minority business enterprise that is certified under the Federal Small Business Act to be deemed certified by the Department of Administration as a minority business enterprise.
- The bill aims to simplify this process for businesses by eliminating duplication.

**Status:** Signed Into Law

## Assisting re-entry into the workforce

- The Fair Chance Licensing Act would have created a new process for deciding whether an applicant's past criminal history should disqualify him or her from receiving an occupational license.
- State agencies and boards administer more than 150 occupational licenses, each with its own set of disqualifying criteria. More than a third of these automatically disqualify candidates who have a criminal conviction.
- This legislation sought to prohibit the practice of automatically denying someone an occupational license and instead to create a process that allows applicants to discuss their fitness for the license more thoroughly.
- This would have allowed people more of an ability to re-enter the workforce after serving criminal sentences.

**Status:** Passed the Senate



# In the News

## Quality of Life and Workforce Prosperity

### State budget includes funding for Rhode Island Livable Home Modification Grant

State House — Included in the state budget passed by the General Assembly is funding for the Rhode Island Livable Home Modification Grant Act that was introduced by Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) and Sen. Walter S. Felag Jr. (D-Dist. 10, Bristol, Tiverton, Warren).

**Source** Reporter Today

**Date** June 30, 2019

**Author** Staff

The grant allows eligible homeowners and renters to retrofit their residence to nationally recognized accessibility standards and receive 50 percent of the total sum spent, up to \$5,000, to retrofit their existing residence.

The budget appropriates \$499,397 to fund the grant program, which grew out of legislation proposed by Representative McNamara and Senator Felag two years ago that would have created a tax credit for homes that were retrofitted.

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**Continue Reading:** <https://www.reportertoday.com/eastprovidence/eastprovidence/stories/state-budget-includes-funding-for-rhode-island-livable-home-modification-grant,27418?>



# Press Releases

## Quality of Life and Workforce Prosperity

### **Senate Bill No. 253** **Substitute A**

### **Informing employees of their rights if company is closing or contracting**

**Date** June 26, 2019

#### **Lawmakers OK bill to provide info on workers' co-ops when companies are set to shutter**

STATE HOUSE – The General Assembly has approved legislation sponsored by House Deputy Majority Whip Christopher R. Blazejewski and Sen. Sandra Cano to notify workers of their opportunity to organize a cooperative and make a bid to buy out their company in the event of a mass layoff or plant closing. The bill, which would take effect Sept. 1, has been transmitted to the governor.

Titled the “Local Ownership Opportunity Act,” the legislation is meant to encourage the preservation of Rhode Island businesses and jobs.

...

“This bill is about informing employees of their rights and opportunities. Forming a workers’ cooperative is a way to keep a local company in business, while also turning workers into entrepreneurs, giving them a greater voice and a genuine stake in their company’s success. Encouraging workers to consider this option can only have positive effects for our state,” said Senator Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket).

[Available Online](#)

### **Senate Bill No. 698** **Substitute A**

### **Allowing hourly and low-wage employees to seek other jobs**

**Date** July 8, 2019

#### **Assembly limits noncompetition agreements**

STATE HOUSE – The General Assembly approved legislation sponsored by Senate Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin and House Deputy Majority Whip Christopher R. Blazejewski making noncompetition agreements unenforceable against hourly and low-wage employees as well as children and college students.

The legislation (2019-S 0698A, 2019-H 6019A) is intended as a way to help employees find other employment when they leave a job.

Noncompetition agreements are meant to place limits on an employee’s activities, such as working for a competitor, often for a period of months or years after they have left their job.

Such agreements have a chilling effect on employees’ ability to seek other work in their field.

...

[Available Online](#)





# Press Releases

## Quality of Life and Workforce Prosperity

### Senate Bill No. 837

### Ensuring veterans' benefits

**Date** June 19, 2019

#### **Bill allowing gay, transgender discharges to be recorded as honorable becomes law**

STATE HOUSE — Gov. Gina Raimondo has signed legislation introduced by Rep. Camille F.J. Vella-Wilkinson (D-Dist. 21, Warwick) and Sen. Dawn Euer (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown) that extends veterans' benefits to gay or transgender members of the armed forces who failed to receive honorable discharges.

The law (2019-H 5443A, 2019-S 0837) provides a petition process to have a discharge from service recorded as honorable for members of the armed services separated from the service with a general or other than honorable discharge due solely to their sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression.

...

"While the armed forces have fortunately stopped discharging members under the 'don't ask, don't tell' policy, the current federal administration has renewed its attacks on our transgender service members. Far too many veterans have been discharged, shamed and left without the benefits they earned because of decades of a dehumanizing policy that said they couldn't serve. They deserved gratitude and honor, and we should be doing everything we can to ensure that these wrongs are righted and that they get the respect they deserve," said Senator Euer.

[Available Online](#)







# Rhode Island Senate

ensures

## Revenue and State Budget Priorities



@risenate



@RISenate



# Ensuring Revenue to Implement Priorities

## State Budget, Fiscal Year 2020

### State budget reflects many Senate priorities

- 1 The \$9.97-billion state budget signed into law on July 5 largely avoids broad-based tax increases while strengthening education, continuing the phase-out of the car tax, maintaining aid to cities and towns, and closing a \$200-million budget gap.
- 2 It reflects many top priorities for the Senate:
  - \$8.6 million more for pre-kindergarten programs;
  - Free bus passes for low-income seniors and people with disabilities;
  - \$5 million a year to support opioid treatment, recovery, and education programs;
  - Increasing hospital reimbursement rates, offset in part by revenue from the hospital license fee; and
  - An expanded Rebuild Rhode Island tax credit program to include historic projects.

STATUS

Signed Into Law

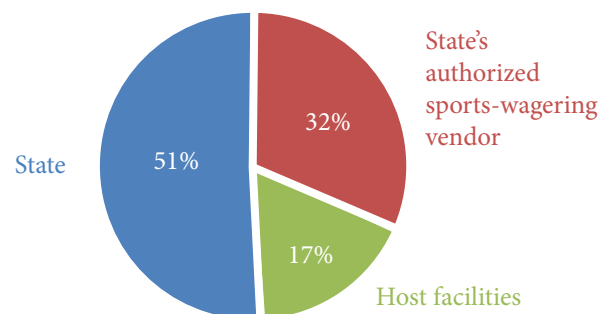


## Senate Bill No. 37 Substitute A

### Law allows mobile sports wagering to capture revenue from sports betting

- 1 This law enables the creation of a mobile application so consumers may remotely access sports gaming offerings at the Twin River casinos, as long as consumers are in the state of Rhode Island.
- 2 Rhode Island's mobile sports wagering system is similar to those in other states, such as New Jersey. Since the gaming system that receives the bets is located on casino premises, the bets are deemed to be placed at the casino.

Allocation of Sports Wagering Revenue



STATUS

Signed Into Law



## Senate Bill No. 251 Substitute A

## Requiring online retailers beyond R.I. to pay local sales tax

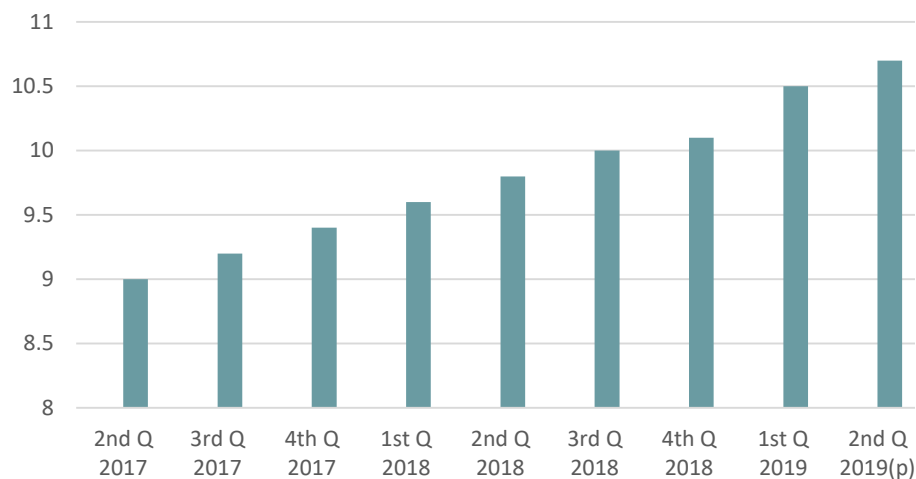
- 1 This law requires out-of-state sellers to collect and remit the same 7% sales tax that brick-and-mortar businesses within the state must pay.
- 2 Enacted in March, this law allowed the changes to be properly implemented in enough time to ensure the maximum amount of revenue can be collected in Fiscal Year 2020, estimated to be \$11.5 million.
- 3 The law came in response to a recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling, *South Dakota v. Wayfair*, which paved the way for a simplified, uniform process to collect such taxes.
- 4 As the South Dakota law did, Rhode Island's law offers a "safe harbor." It exempts remote sellers from the tax if they generate less than \$100,000 in gross revenue or record fewer than 200 transactions in the state annually.

## STATUS

## Signed Into Law



E-Commerce as a Percent of Total Retail Sales, Nationwide



SOURCE: Data from [U.S. Census Bureau](#); graphic created by R.I. Senate Policy Office



# Funding Other Senate Priorities

## State Budget, Article 1 and Article 6, Fiscal Year 2020

### Supporting high-quality education

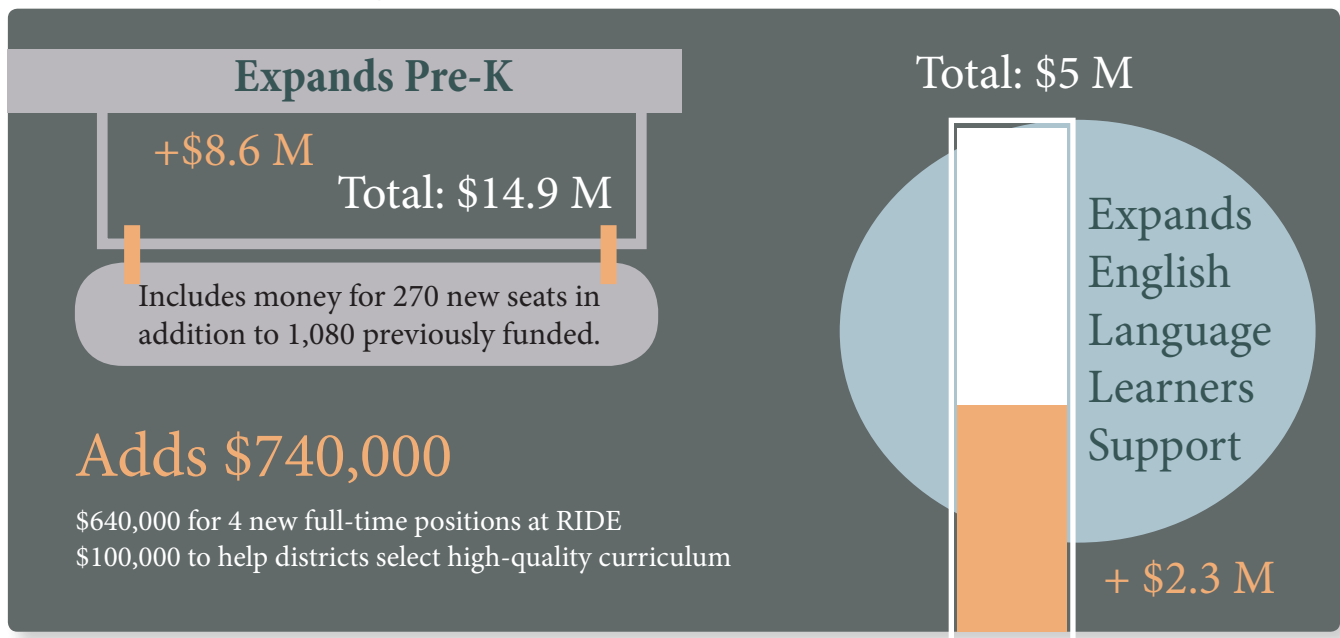
- 1 The budget fully funds the state's education aid formula. It increases direct aid to Rhode Island schools by \$31.2 million above the Fiscal Year 2019 amount.
- 2 The budget continues the Rhode Island Promise Scholarship Program, which pays the tuition for eligible high school graduates to attend the Community College of Rhode Island for 2 years.
- 3 The budget authorizes the University of Rhode Island to issue revenue bonds for construction, including:
  - \$51.5 million to renovate and expand Memorial Union and
  - \$26.9 million for a new combined health and counseling center.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



The State Budget for Fiscal Year 2020 also:



SOURCE: Graphic created by R.I. Senate Policy Office

## State Budget, Article 5 and Article 12, Fiscal Year 2020

## Expanding certain economic development incentives

- 1 The budget increases the total in Rebuild R.I. tax credits that the Commerce Corporation may approve, from \$150 million to \$210 million, and it extends the program's sunset until the end of 2020.
- 2 The \$210-million Rebuild cap also includes sales-tax exemptions that Commerce approves for Rebuild projects, strengthening overall program oversight.
- 3 Projects approved for historic preservation tax credits whose credits were set to expire on Dec. 31, 2019, now remain in effect until the end of 2022.



**STATUS**

**Signed Into Law**



## State Budget, Article 13, Fiscal Year 2020

## Increasing support for hospitals, nursing homes, and direct support professionals

- 1 The state budget increases Medicaid reimbursement rates for inpatient and outpatient hospital services by 7.2%.
- 2 Legislators increased the Medicaid reimbursement rate to nursing home facilities by 1%, which increases funding by \$3.1 million.
- 3 The budget adds \$9.5 million to assist with wage increases for the professionals who work with adults with developmental disabilities. The state is authorized through its Medicaid waiver to provide services to people who meet certain income requirements.

**STATUS**

**Signed Into Law**



# Working to Maintain Federal Funding

## State Budget, Article 1, Fiscal Year 2020

## Counting every Rhode Islander

- 1 The state budget allocates \$500,000 in state funds for outreach regarding the upcoming census to help ensure a full and accurate count of all Rhode Islanders. This also ensured the state would receive another \$200,000 in federal funds for the work.
- 2 The next census is crucial for Rhode Island, which is in danger of losing a Congressional seat and having only one at-large district for the first time since 1793.
- 3 States' census populations serve as the baseline for determining federal appropriations and factor into the apportioning of state legislative seats.
- 4 An undercount in the next census would put at risk a portion of the nearly \$3.1 billion in federal funds appropriated to Rhode Island every year for health care, education, and housing.



## STATUS

## Signed Into Law



“ The upcoming census will determine our federal funding for the next decade. It is imperative that we have an accurate count so that the proper and necessary amount of federal dollars is applied to Rhode Island’s residents. This extra appropriation ... in the state budget is a small investment for the billions of dollars in federal money that is at stake so we must take the census count very seriously.”

**Senator Sandra Cano**

Lead sponsor of [Senate Resolution No. 743](#) to support the Census Day of Action

# Appendix: Revenue and State Budget Priorities

## State Budget, Article 1, Fiscal Year 2020

### Restoring municipal aid

- Legislators restored \$21.5 million in municipal aid that the Governor had recommended to be cut in her budget. The Governor's budget proposal had included:
  - Cuts to the phase-out of the car tax and
  - Cuts to the Payment in Lieu of Taxes program, which reimburses cities and towns a portion of what they would have collected for property if it were not owned by nonprofits, which are exempt from taxes.

**Status:** Signed Into Law

## State Budget, Article 6 and Article 7, Fiscal Year 2020

### Fixing transportation infrastructure

- Legislators approved the issuance of state bonds to fund the reconstruction of the viaduct that carries Interstate 95 through downtown Providence.
  - Known as GARVEE (Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicles), these bonds are intended to be paid back in future years with money the state expects to receive from the Federal Highway Administration for road projects.
  - Issuing the bonds now allows the state to take advantage of current low interest rates.
- The budget also authorizes the Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority to issue up to \$50 million in revenue bonds to renovate and repair the Mount Hope, Jamestown Verrazzano, Newport Pell, and Sakonnet River bridges.
- The budget requires the state to start replacing current Rhode Island license plates with a new design when residents renew their vehicle registrations – to be funded with an \$8 fee per vehicle, which is a \$2 increase.
- Lawmakers rejected the Governor's plan to eliminate the license reissuance, which is required by law.

**Status:** Signed Into Law

## **Expansion for medical marijuana, but no legalization of recreational marijuana**

- Legislators did not approve the Governor's proposal to legalize recreational marijuana or her proposed restrictions on homegrown medical marijuana.
- The budget authorizes six more compassion centers to sell medical marijuana, beyond the three existing ones.
- Legislators increased the licensing fees for the compassion centers to \$500,000 each.

**Status:** Signed Into Law





# In the News

## Revenue and State Budget Priorities

### R.I. Senate approves \$9.9-billion budget

PROVIDENCE — With final Senate votes on Thursday night, the Rhode Island General Assembly has now approved — and sent to the governor — a \$9.9-billion budget that ushers in another car-tax cut while imposing a new “Netflix tax” and reshapes the state’s marijuana industry.

**Source** The Providence Journal

**Date** June 27, 2019

**Author** Katherine Gregg and Madeleine List

The Senate approved the annual tax-and-spending bill on a 30-to-8 vote at 10:50 p.m., despite concerns that the budget underfunds a state agency in crisis: the Department of Children, Youth and Families.

“There’s no way in God’s green earth that DCYF will be able to achieve a \$229-million budget,” said Sen. Louis DiPalma, after spending \$249 million this year. Sen. Ana Quezada voiced her own frustration at the failure to add more front-line workers at the agency in the wake of a heartbreaking report by the state’s child advocate on the series of missed warning flags that led up to the death of a disabled child in a bathtub.

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**Continue Reading:** <https://www.providencejournal.com/news/20190627/ri-senate-approves-99-billion-budget>

### R.I. lawmakers unveil nearly \$10-billion state budget

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (WPRI) — Rhode Island lawmakers late Friday night unveiled a nearly \$10 billion proposed state budget for the 2019-20 fiscal year that gives Gov. Gina Raimondo only some of her highest-profile priorities while limiting new taxes and boosting funding for education.

**Source** Channel 12 WPRI-TV

**Date** June 14, 2019

**Author** Ted Nesi

The budget bill — released around 11 p.m. — revises the tax-and-spending plan put forward in January by the Democratic governor and follows months of public hearings and private horse-trading. The new fiscal year begins July 1.

“Our principles in this budget were to make sure the budget was business-friendly, did not impose any new taxes that we felt were onerous to our economy, and we wanted to continue to provide an environment for economic growth,” House Speaker Nicholas Mattiello, D-Cranston, told reporters at a briefing Friday night.

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**Continue Reading:** <https://www.wpri.com/news/ri-lawmakers-unveil-nearly-10-billion-state-budget/>



# Press Releases

## Revenue and State Budget Priorities

### State Budget, Fiscal Year 2020

### Budget avoids new taxes, strengthens education, and continues phasing out car tax

Date June 27, 2019

#### General Assembly approves 2020 state budget bill

STATE HOUSE – With a 30-8 vote in the Senate today, the General Assembly has approved a \$9.97-billion budget for the 2020 fiscal year that largely avoids new taxes while strengthening education, continuing the car-tax phase-out and maintaining municipal aid, while also closing a \$200-million budget gap. The bill will now be sent to the governor.

“The Senate Finance Committee conducted 44 budget hearings along with many discussions with our Senate colleagues to understand the priorities and concerns of Rhode Island’s citizens. I’m pleased that we were able to support and expand education at every level from early childhood to college, and that we are continuing to foster economic development, especially for small businesses. This is a responsible budget that invests our resources based on our state’s needs and goals,” said Senate Finance Committee Chairman William J. Conley Jr.

Said House Finance Committee Chairman Marvin L. Abney (D-Dist. 73, Newport, Middletown), “As with any legislative session, the state budget is perhaps the most important bill that comes before the General Assembly because it affects every single resident of Rhode Island. The House Finance Committee has spent countless hours vetting and hearing testimony on the governor’s budget proposal. We have faced numerous hard decisions when formulating this budget, and I am proud of the work that has been accomplished. I believe that this budget will serve the people of Rhode Island fairly while also keeping our economy stable and strong for the future to come.”

The bill (2019-H 5151Aaa) restores full funding for the third year of the phase-out of the automobile excise tax, a program instituted through legislation sponsored by House Speaker Nicholas Mattiello. In the budget she submitted to legislators earlier in the year, the governor had proposed slowing down the phase-out, which is set to be complete after FY 2023.

The Assembly did not include the governor’s proposal to institute a new fee on large businesses whose employees are enrolled in Medicaid programs, nor did it include her proposal to expand the sales tax to include lobbying services, design services and commercial building contracts for services like cleaning and landscaping. It also declined to increase the hotel tax and didn’t include a new excise tax on firearms and ammunition. Lawmakers did let one part of her sales tax expansion stand: digital downloads and streaming services like Netflix will be subject to the sales tax.

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# Press Releases

## Revenue and State Budget Priorities

### State Budget, Fiscal Year 2020

### Leveling the playing field for small businesses

**Date** June 27, 2019

#### **Budget includes tax measure for small businesses**

STATE HOUSE – The budget passed by the General Assembly today incorporates legislation introduced earlier in the session by House Majority Leader K. Joseph Shekarchi and Sen. Mark P. McKenney to help the many Rhode Island small business owners who will be hit by higher federal taxes under President Trump’s new tax laws.

The proposal will provide a work-around for owners of “pass-through” entities whose state and local taxes exceed the new \$10,000 cap on the state and local tax (SALT) deduction on their federal tax returns. The effort, which is based on a similar bill enacted in Connecticut in May, is carefully designed to be revenue-neutral for the state.

...

“This change is a way to provide tax relief to small businesses who have been unexpectedly asked to shoulder a greater burden and put at a disadvantage compared to larger businesses under the new tax laws. Small businesses are critical to our economy, and leveling the playing field for them in this manner is good for our state,” said Senator McKenney (D-Dist. 30, Warwick).

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### Senate Bill No. 251 Substitute A

### A question of fairness for R.I.’s brick-and-mortar businesses

**Date** March 26, 2019

#### **General Assembly passes legislation to collect sales taxes from online retailers**

STATE HOUSE — The General Assembly today passed legislation introduced by Sen. William J. Conley Jr. (D-Dist. 18, East Providence, Pawtucket) and Rep. Marvin L. Abney (D-Dist. 73, Newport, Middletown) that would provide a process for collecting sales tax from out-of-state sellers — removing the unfair advantage online retailers have in competing against Rhode Island businesses.

The bill (2019-S 0251A, 2019-H 5278A) would extend the requirement to collect sales tax to remote sellers in a way that conforms to a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision making it easier for states to compel collection of the sales tax from retailers who do not have a physical presence in their state.

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# Press Releases

## Revenue and State Budget Priorities

### State Budget, Fiscal Year 2020

### Fixing Rhode Island's deficient infrastructure

**Date** June 22, 2019

#### **Budget includes bonds to replace Route 95 viaduct in Providence**

STATE HOUSE – The budget bill approved by the House today includes authorization of up to \$200 million in GARVEE bonds that will allow Rhode Island to take advantage of current low interest rates to fund the reconstruction of the viaduct that carries Route 95 north through downtown Providence.

Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicle (GARVEE) bonds are a common funding mechanism that allows the state to begin highway projects in anticipation of receipt of federal funds.

Separate legislation (2019-S 0633A, 2019-H 5883) to authorize the bonds was introduced on behalf of the Department of Transportation earlier in the session by Senate Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence) and House Majority Whip John G. Edwards (D-Dist. 70, Tiverton, Portsmouth).

The 1,300-foot long bridge, built in 1964, brings the highway alongside Providence Place Mall over train tracks, the Woonasquatucket River and numerous streets, carrying an estimated 180,000 to 190,000 vehicles daily. Replacement of the southbound bridge was completed in 2017, but the northbound side remains structurally deficient and in need of widening and better traffic control.

The DOT's plan would add lanes and better separate entering and exiting vehicles from other traffic to relieve congestion. The agency hopes to begin the construction in 2020, and expects it to last about five years.

Funding the project with GARVEE bonds would allow the state to lock in current low interest rates and take advantage of increased federal funding made available through the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act enacted by Congress in 2015.

"The Providence viaduct is one of the busiest, most congested sections of highway in all of Rhode Island, and it's a structure that is both outdated and structurally deficient. Replacing it sooner rather than allowing it to continue to deteriorate is good public safety policy, sound economic development and a way to save money due to the low interest rates that are currently available. Rhode Island needs to address our crumbling infrastructure to attract businesses and improve our quality of life, and this particular bridge stands out as one that plays a central role to the Providence commute. Its replacement will make a difference to many Rhode Islanders," said Senator Goodwin.

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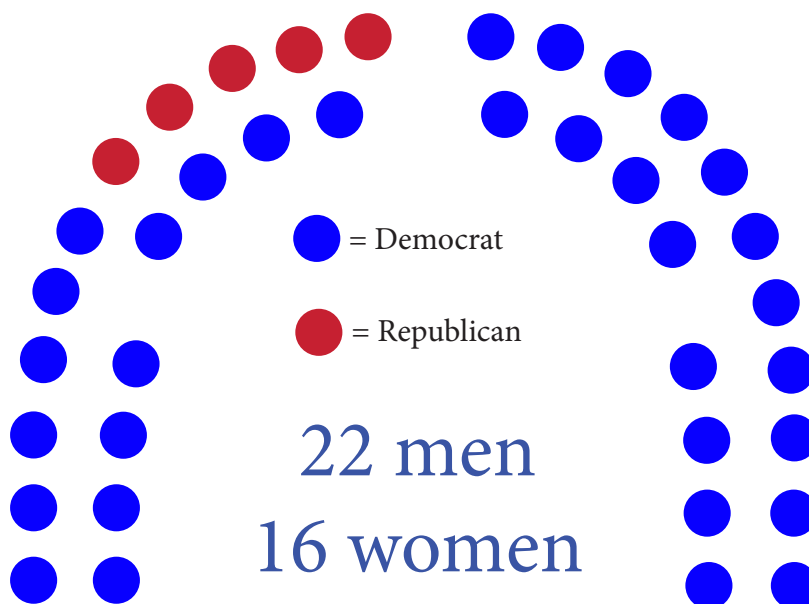
[Available Online](#)







# SENATE OVERVIEW



**Many Senators have full-time jobs in addition to being legislators. They are teachers, independent business owners, parents, bankers, community leaders, lawyers, farmers, and more.**

## Bill Tracker

If you are following particular legislation closely, you may sign up online for the General Assembly's Bill Tracker system. It sends email alerts when bills are scheduled for committee hearings and floor votes and when they are transmitted to the opposite chamber.

**Sign up for Bill Tracker here: <http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/billtracker>**



# Senate Committees

## Commerce

**Chairman:** Senator Roger A. Picard  
**Vice Chairwoman:** Senator Ana B. Quezada

## Education

**Chairwoman:** Senator Hanna M. Gallo  
**Vice Chairman:** Senator Harold M. Metts

## Environment & Agriculture

**Chairwoman:** Senator V. Susan Sosnowski  
**Vice Chairwoman:** Senator Cynthia A. Coyne

## Finance

**Chairman:** Senator William J. Conley Jr.  
**1st Vice Chairman:** Senator Louis P. DiPalma  
**2nd Vice Chairman:** Senator Walter S. Felag Jr.

## Health & Human Services

**Chairman:** Senator Joshua Miller  
**Vice Chairwoman:** Senator Gayle L. Goldin

## Housing & Municipal Government

**Chairman:** Senator Frank Lombardo III  
**Vice Chairwoman:** Senator Elizabeth A. Crowley

## Judiciary

**Chairwoman:** Senator Erin Lynch Prata  
**Vice Chairman:** Senator Stephen R. Archambault

## Labor

**Chairman:** Senator Frank A. Ciccone III  
**Vice Chairwoman:** Senator Sandra Cano

## Rules, Government Ethics & Oversight

**Chairman:** Senator Frank S. Lombardi  
**Vice Chairman:** Senator James C. Sheehan

## Special Legislation & Veterans' Affairs

**Chairman:** Senator Walter S. Felag Jr.  
**Vice Chairman:** Senator Leonidas P. Raptakis

**Complete Committee Memberships Available Online:**  
<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/CommitteeMembers/>

# The Rhode Island Senate

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An even more robust version of the Report is available online, with active links to bills, resolutions, news articles, graphics, and press releases.

**Read the online edition of the 2019 Senate Session Report here:**

<http://www.rilegislature.gov/reports/SenateSessionReport2019.pdf>

**Additionally, the 2018 Senate Session Report is archived here:**

<http://www.rilegislature.gov/reports/SenateSessionReport2018.pdf>



# 146th Senate Session



2019