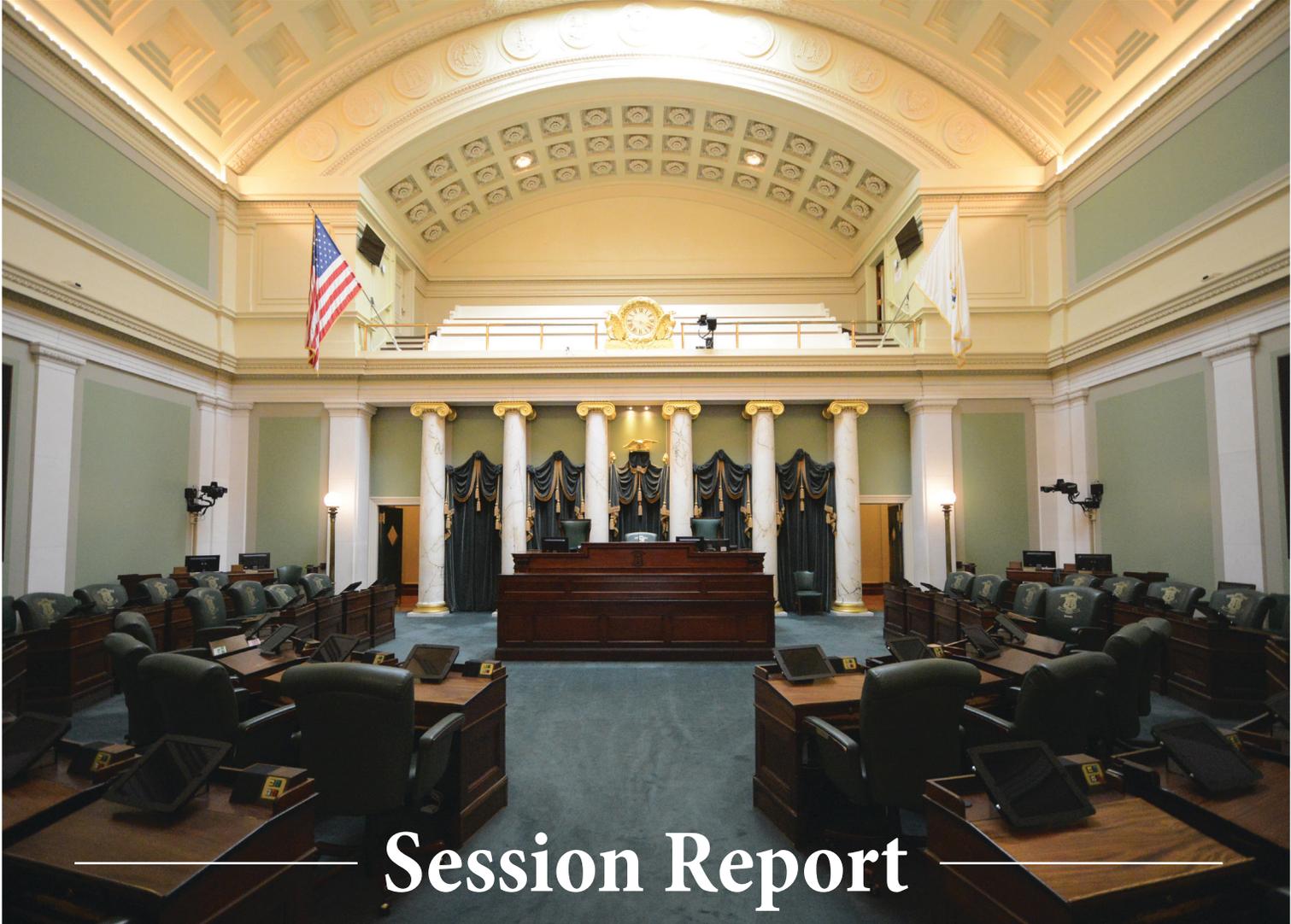


Rhode Island Senate

A wide-angle photograph of the interior of the Rhode Island Senate Chamber. The room is grand and ornate, with a high, vaulted ceiling featuring a grid of decorative panels. The walls are light green, and the floor is a dark blue carpet. In the center, there is a raised wooden platform with a decorative canopy. The chamber is filled with rows of dark wood desks and black leather chairs, each equipped with a laptop. An American flag is visible on the left side of the chamber.

Session Report

145th Senate Session
2018

 @risenate

 @RISenate



Dear fellow Rhode Islanders,

As I reflect upon the highlights of our 2018 Senate session, I am pleased to present our first public Rhode Island Senate Accomplishments Book. While there's plenty on the following pages about our priorities to fix our crumbling schools, fight the opioid epidemic, and improve public safety, you'll also find links to bills and additional information if you want to learn even more.

It's important to keep in mind that just four years ago, Rhode Island was struggling to recover from the Great Recession. With double-digit unemployment, we were scrambling to train unemployed residents with the skills they need for today's modern economy.

By May of this year, our unemployment rate had dropped to 4.4 percent, and we topped half a million jobs for the first time in our history. Global companies that could locate anywhere in the world have chosen to expand here – Wexford, the Cambridge Innovation Center, Infosys, and Johnson & Johnson, to name a few. Rhode Island is home to the nation's first offshore wind farm, and we announced a major expansion of offshore wind in May.

The Senate entered 2018 determined to build upon this economic momentum. In the following pages, you'll read about our top priorities:

- A once-in-a-generation investment in our school facilities, which requires your consideration in November of the \$250-million bond initiative for school construction costs;
- Efforts to ensure that employees are paid equitably for comparable work – regardless of gender, ethnicity, or other factors – and to protect against workplace sexual harassment;
- An \$11 million cash infusion in the state budget to continue our improved job-training programs, Real Jobs and Real Pathways;
- Improved public safety measures to keep guns away from people who pose a clear danger to society and to prohibit “bump stocks” that make semi-automatic firearms even more dangerous; and
- Protections for our most vulnerable residents, including foster youth, people struggling with opioid addiction, seniors, people with disabilities, and animals at risk of abuse.

I am fortunate to have an exceptional group of colleagues working alongside me in the Rhode Island Senate, individuals who are deeply committed to public service. As always, their work centers on listening to the needs of their constituents and working to pass legislation to address your concerns and the demands of our state. I believe their many talents and insights have resulted in legislation that will strengthen our state for generations to come.

It is my sincere hope that our work reflected on the following pages will inform you and inspire you to continue your work improving our state. We look forward to hearing from you and continuing to collaborate with you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dominick J. Ruggiero". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "D".

Dominick J. Ruggiero
President of the Senate

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Rhode Island Senate

prioritizes

Economic and Workforce Prosperity

 @risenate



 @RISenate

Equality in the Workplace

Senate Bill No. 2475
Substitute A as amended

Senate Bill No. 2638
Substitute A

Closing the wage gap and expanding employment protections

1 Early in 2018, the Rhode Island Senate prioritized an equal pay bill with a corresponding data collection bill.

2 Senators hope to empower the Department of Labor and Training to begin gathering detailed wage information to learn more precisely how salaries differ in our state for women, for people of different races and ethnicities, and for people of different ages.

3 The legislation mirrors Rhode Island’s general antidiscrimination laws, expanding its protections to include age, disability, race, religion, sexual orientation, and gender identity. This bill sought to ensure that all employees would be paid equally for “comparable work,” a term in use in 10 states, including Massachusetts.

4 Additional protections in the bill would include prohibiting employers from asking prospective employees for their wage histories. A job offer based on a current salary tends to perpetuate the wage gap because many people are underpaid in their current jobs.

5 The Senate adopted its equal pay bills on April 10, recognized symbolically as “Equal PayDay”—the day in 2018 through which women have to work to earn what men earned the year before.

STATUS

Passed the Senate



Equal Pay Day (Women vs. Men)

Women vs. Men	80 cents	April 10
Asian Women vs. White, non-Hispanic Men:	87 cents	February 22
White, non-Hispanic Women vs. White, non-Hispanic Men:	79 cents	April 17
Moms vs. Dads:	71 cents	May 30
Black Women vs. White, non-Hispanic Men:	63 cents	August 7
Native Women vs. White, non-Hispanic Men:	57 cents	September 27
Latinas vs. White, non-Hispanic Men:	54 cents	November 1

Data source: Equal Pay Today! Campaign, affiliated with the National Women’s Law Center and with Equal Rights Advocates

Senate Bill No. 2699



Protecting against sexual harassment in the workplace

1

This legislation would amend the state's sexual harassment law by:

- Removing the exemption for household employees;
- Making it an unlawful employment practice to retaliate against someone who makes a sexual harassment claim; and
- Expanding how many employers must comply with the law—by changing the definition of employer from an entity employing 50 or more people to an entity employing four or more people.

2

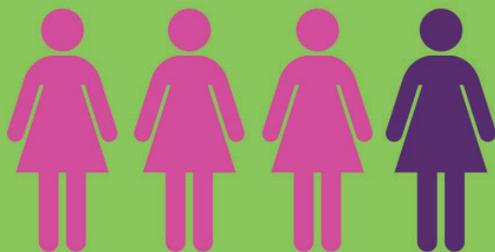
Employers with four or more employees would be required to provide sexual harassment training to new employees within one month of the start of employment.

3

The Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights would be tasked with overseeing implementation of employers' sexual harassment training programs.

STATUS

Passed the Senate



At least 1 in 4 women will be the victim of sexual harassment in the workplace

Approximately **90%** of individuals who say they have experienced harassment never take formal action against the harassment

Source: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Training for Today's Jobs

State Budget, Article 11 as amended, Fiscal Year 2019

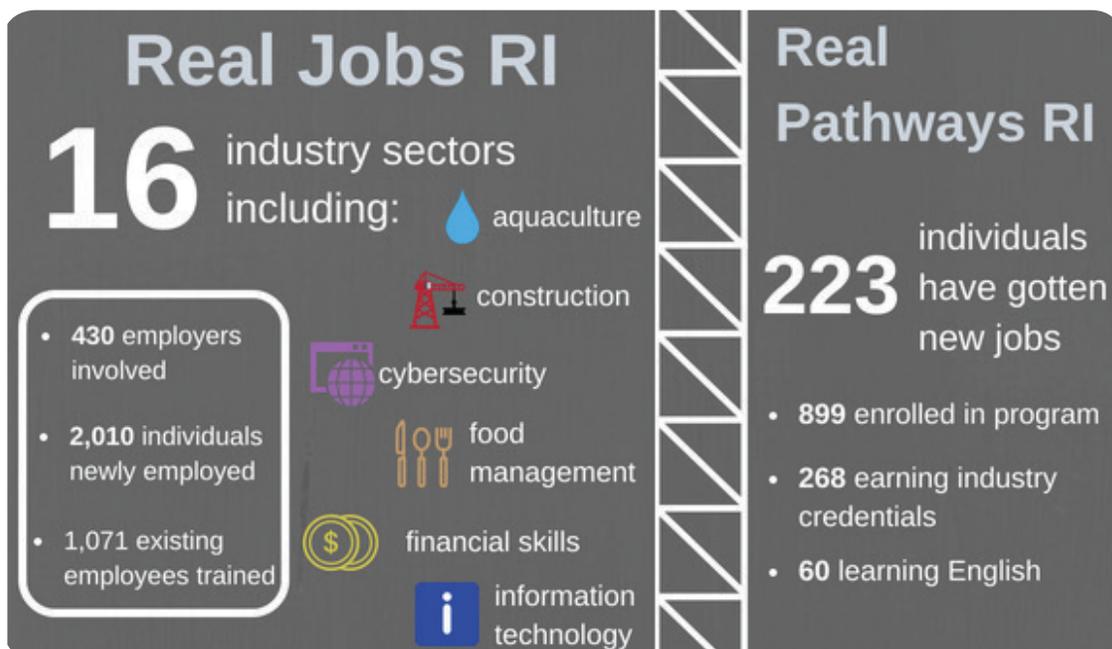


Funding for Real Jobs Rhode Island program

- 1 Rhode Island has shifted away from traditional workforce training programs—which prepared people for jobs the state expected to exist in future years. Real Jobs RI works with employers to determine their hiring needs and requires companies, educational institutions, and government to collaborate and develop appropriate job-training programs.
- 2 This year's budget includes a one-time cash infusion for Real Jobs training—nearly \$11 million.
- 3 For one year, the state has also altered how it will help fund job-training programs, by setting aside up to 75% of the interest earned from the state's unemployment insurance trust fund.
- 4 The Senate also supported protections to stop diverting interest from that fund if a downturn in the economy results in additional need for unemployment benefits.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



Digging in to learn more about Real Jobs Rhode Island

- 1 In the spring of 2018, the Senate Committee on Rules, Government Ethics and Oversight invited the Department of Labor and Training to share data about its job-training programs—the first public examination delving into program results and challenges.
- 2 Real Jobs began in 2015 and seeks to train people for job openings at companies that have partnered with the labor department and to train existing workers who need new skills in the jobs they have.
- 3 Real Pathways began in 2017, as the labor department recognized people are still struggling after the Great Recession, which wiped out 39,800 jobs in Rhode Island, and some people need even more help than Real Jobs offers.
- 4 Both programs are partnerships between businesses with hiring needs, education and nonprofit entities with training skills, and state and federal financing that augments the private investment in job training.
- 5 Real Pathways helps people who have additional barriers to finding work, either because they're still working to learn English; they've been imprisoned and find it challenging as an ex-offender to get a job; they've returned from active military service and may need help recognizing how their skills translate to the civilian world; or they're struggling with homelessness and need far more assistance than only job training.

Committee Hearings Archived on Capitol TV



Watch Hearings

May 16, 2018



<https://bit.ly/2MawXtK>

May 23, 2018



<https://bit.ly/2KDYZJ9>

Protecting Pension Funds

In 2018, the Senate worked to protect members of the insolvent St. Joseph Health Services pension fund, which was put into receivership during the summer of 2017. The \$85-million pension plan covers about 2,700 current and former employees of Our Lady of Fatima and Roger Williams hospitals. The fund became insolvent after contributions to the fund ceased with the sale of both hospitals to Prospect Medical Holdings in 2014.

The Senate tackled the underlying issues that led to the pension fund's collapse with a legislative package of bills to encourage settlements in the members' multiple class-action lawsuits; to protect such pension funds in the future; and to increase transparency and accountability when hospitals are sold.

Senate Bill No. 2112



Encouraging settlements in the St. Joseph's pension fund receivership

- 1 This new law only applies to the settlement of claims related to the St. Joseph Health Services of Rhode Island Retirement Plan. It is modeled after similar legislation passed after the deadly Station Nightclub fire in 2003 in West Warwick.
- 2 Members of the insolvent pension plan will be better positioned to negotiate good-faith settlements with other parties to their class-action lawsuits.
- 3 Defendants who are released by the court after reaching a settlement with claimants will not be liable for additional settlements reached after their release.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



“If we can tighten up the Health Conversions Act ... Hopefully, we’ll never have a situation like this again.”

Senator Michael J. McCaffrey, Senate Majority Leader
[The Providence Journal article](#)

Senate Bill No. 2467 as amended

Protecting pension plans during hospital transfers

- 1 This legislation stipulated that the General Treasurer would conduct a review of any defined benefit plan not subject to the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (E.R.I.S.A.) prior to the sale or acquisition of a hospital.
- 2 The General Treasurer would make findings regarding the health of such pension plans available to the General Assembly and Attorney General.
- 3 Any entity that acquires a hospital with such a pension plan would need to provide annual notice to plan members regarding the plan's fiscal health.

STATUS

Passed the Senate



Senate Bill No. 2983

Increasing accountability and transparency during hospital conversions



- 1 Currently, the Attorney General and Department of Health conduct interviews and hearings throughout a hospital conversion process; however, this law now requires those proceedings to occur under oath in the presence of a stenographer.
- 2 The St. Joseph retirees have filed a lawsuit against the parties they say are responsible for mismanaging the pension fund, arguing that parties to the hospital sale made material misrepresentations of facts and omitted crucial details concerning the health of their pension fund.
- 3 Interviews, statements, and testimony, including documents submitted during a future hospital conversion process, would be subject to the standards outlined in this law.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



Improving the Workplace Environment

Senate Bill No. 2228 Substitute A as amended



Banning e-cigarettes to protect employees' health

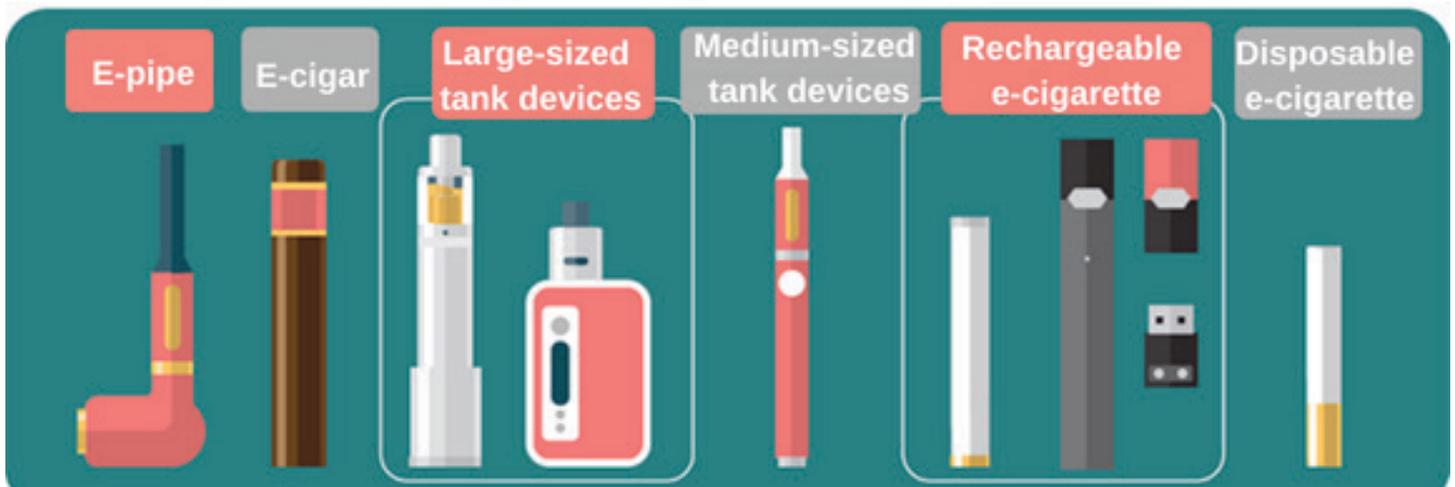
- 1 This law adds e-cigarettes, vaporizers, and similar nicotine-delivery products to the definition of “smoking” in the Public Health and Workplace Safety Act—an effort to protect workers and the public from the effects of secondhand nicotine vapors.
- 2 The law creates exemptions for establishments that sell food or alcohol and make at least 33% of their revenue from the sale of electronic tobacco devices.
- 3 Electronic smoking-device establishments that open after July 1, 2018, must demonstrate that 33% of annual revenue is related to e-cigarettes and vaping products and must register with the Division of Taxation.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



Examples of e-cigarette products



Information source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Raising New Revenue for State's Priorities

State Budget, Article 4 as amended, Fiscal Year 2019



Authorizing sports wagering at Twin River and Tiverton casinos

- 1 Following the U.S Supreme Court decision in *Murphy v. NCAA*, the General Assembly authorized the implementation and operation of sports wagering at Twin River and Tiverton gaming facilities.
- 2 Estimates indicate the state could gain \$23.5 million in new revenue from sports wagering this fiscal year.
- 3 The Division of Lottery is authorized to enter into an agreement with the gaming facilities to allocate revenue from sports wagering, based upon the following formula:
 - 51% to the State of Rhode Island;
 - 32% to the state's authorized wagering vendor; and
 - 17% to the host facility.
- 4 The towns of Lincoln and Tiverton will receive additional compensation of \$100,000 per year for serving as the host communities for the wagering.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



“Sports wagering provides the state with a revenue stream that supports critical priorities, such as investing in roads and schools, without increasing the tax burden on citizens. Rhode Island taxpayers will be receiving the highest percentage of revenue in the nation from sports wagering. ... This provides a legal means for Rhode Islanders to enjoy a form of entertainment in which many already engage.”

Senator Dominick J. Ruggerio, President of the Senate

[Read more](#)

Appendix: Economic and Workforce Prosperity

Senate Bill No. 2471 Substitute A

Stopping abuse in the workplace

- This bill would create the “Healthy Workplace Act of 2018,” making it an unlawful employment practice to subject an employee to an abusive work environment.
- Retaliating in any manner against an employee who participated in a complaint about an abusive work environment would also be unlawful.

Status: Passed the Senate

Senate Bill No. 2665 Substitute A

Connecting underserved small businesses with hard-to-access capital investment

- This bill would establish a private capital fund, capped at \$65 million, to provide investment in qualified small businesses in Rhode Island.
- The small business development fund would leverage private capital by offering investors insurance premium tax credits that they could redeem or sell to offset their tax liability.
- Those tax credits would not be redeemable for the first three years of the program while the fund was being capitalized. Beginning in the program’s fourth year, credits would be redeemable up to a cap of \$14 million per year for 3 years.
- Small businesses with fewer than 250 employees and less than \$15 million in net income would be the target of this investment fund.

Status: Passed the Senate

Senate Bill No. 2851

Setting standardized fees for sealers of weights and measures

- This law now allows sealers of weights and measures appointed by cities and towns to receive the same fees charged by state sealers who perform the same inspecting and testing services.

Status: Signed Into Law

Creating new opportunities for employees affected by plant closings or mass layoffs

- This bill sought to preserve jobs by giving employees who would be affected by plant closures or mass layoffs the opportunity to create worker-owned cooperatives to furnish competitive bids to buy the business that's in danger of closing or downsizing.
- This bill would require the Department of Labor and Training to provide information to affected employees, and it sought to expand workers' cooperative programs established during the previous legislative session.

Status: Passed the Senate



In the News

Economic and Workforce Prosperity

Senate Bill No. 2475 Substitute A

R.I. legislation to ensure equal pay undergoes changes

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Supporters of a wage-equity bill that would prohibit employers from asking job candidates what they make have tweaked the legislation in response to concerns from the business community.

Source The Providence Journal

Date April 4, 2018

Author Patrick Anderson

The changes include reduced penalties for violator companies that do a “fair-pay analysis of the employer’s pay practices” and show progress toward eliminating the wage differential.

The new version also adds exemptions for travel and late-night shift compensation and pushes the effective date to Jan. 1, 2019, instead of immediately after the bill is passed.

Continue Reading on: <http://www.providencejournal.com/news/20180404/ri-legislation-to-ensure-equal-pay-undergoes-changes>

Senate Bill No. 2638 Substitute A

Senate passes wage gap laws on Equal Pay Day

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) -- The Rhode Island Senate passed legislation that sponsors say provides tools to address the pay gap between races and genders.

Source Channel 12 WPRI-TV

Date April 10, 2018

The Senate passed three bills that addressed wage disparities Tuesday, which is known as Equal Pay Day.

One of the bills, sponsored by Democratic Senator Gayle Goldin, would provide protections against employer-imposed wage gaps based on factors like race, color, religion and sexual orientation. It would also require employers to justify such gaps.

Continue Reading on: <https://www.wpri.com/news/local-news/providence/senate-passes-wage-gap-laws-on-equal-pay-day-1/1112225226>



Press Releases

Economic and Workforce Prosperity

Senate Bill No. 2112

Encouraging settlements in the St. Joseph's pension fund receivership

Date June 26, 2018

Bill to assist St. Joseph's pension system members signed into law

Link [Read online](#)

Legislation sponsored by Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio and House Majority Leader K. Joseph Shekarchi to help members of the insolvent St. Joseph's Health Services pension plan reach settlements in their multiple class-action lawsuits was signed into law today by Gov. Gina M. Raimondo.

The legislation (2018-S 2112, 2018-H 8166), which passed the General Assembly last week, will incentivize settlement by better positioning members of the insolvent plan to reach fair, equitable settlements with the multiple defendants of the lawsuits.

"The beneficiaries of this pension plan, many of whom are my constituents, worked hard taking care of other Rhode Islanders throughout their careers," said Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio. "They did everything they were supposed to do, and were promised a secure retirement in return. This legislation affords them a proven legal strategy that has been used successfully to encourage settlements in other high profile cases in Rhode Island. Our intent is that it will result in a swift settlement that will make the pensioners whole or as close to whole as possible."

"All of Rhode Island wants to see the fairest possible settlements for the thousands of people whose investments and retirement have been imperiled by the pension fund's insolvency," said House Majority Leader K. Joseph Shekarchi. "They are the innocent victims of the mismanagement of the fund, and this legislation will help ensure that they are able to pursue every avenue for restitution and reach equitable settlements."

Similar legislation has been used to facilitate the settlement of other high-stakes, multi-party lawsuits including the Station Fire case, ensuring that vital funds got into the hands of victims as quickly as possible.

"Members of the St. Joseph's pension plan dedicated their careers to working at St. Joseph's, only to have the rug pulled out from under them through no fault of their own," said Governor Gina M. Raimondo. "I know many of those affected rely on their pensions for their livelihood, and I hope this legislation expedites an agreeable settlement."

[Continue Reading](#)



Press Releases

Economic and Workforce Prosperity

Senate Bill No. 2228 Substitute A as amended

Banning e-cigarettes to protect employees' health

Date July 6, 2018

Electronic smoking, vaping now included in workplace smoking ban

Link [Read online](#)

STATE HOUSE – The use of electronic tobacco delivery products and vaping are now included in Rhode Island’s workplace smoking ban, under legislation sponsored by Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio and recently signed by Gov. Gina M. Raimondo.

The legislation (2018-S 2228Aaa), which took effect July 1, adds the use of e-cigarettes, vaporizers, and similar products designed for electronic, vapor or aerosol delivery of nicotine, to the definition of “smoking” in the Public Health and Workplace Safety Act, which in 2005 banned smoking in nearly all enclosed areas of places that are open to the public, including private businesses, restaurants, most bars, public restrooms, athletic fields, health care facilities, shopping malls, bingo facilities, common areas of apartment buildings with more than four units and many other places.

The new law is meant to protect workers and the public from the effects of secondhand nicotine vapors. The World Health Organization recommends that electronic smoking devices not be used indoors, especially in smoke-free environments, to minimize the risk to bystanders of breathing emissions and to avoid undermining the enforcement of smoke-free laws.

“For more than a decade, our state has prohibited smoking in most workplaces due to the dangers of secondhand smoke. But most of us had never heard of e-cigarettes or vaping back in 2004 when we enacted that ban. Since then, use of those products has taken off. In Rhode Island and nationwide, use of e-cigarettes by youth has surpassed use of conventional cigarettes. We must address newer forms of smoking, both to protect Rhode Islanders from secondhand smoke and to help address the misconception that those products are somehow not unhealthy. The intent of the smoking ban was to eliminate smoking in the workplace, and this legislation brings our law up to date to address smoking in all its forms,” said President Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence).

The law creates exemptions for stores, other than mall kiosks, that primarily sell electronic nicotine delivery products and accessories, and for electronic smoking establishments, defined as establishments that sell food or alcohol, and make at least 33 percent of their revenue from the sale of electronic tobacco devices.

[Continue Reading](#)



Press Releases

Economic and Workforce Prosperity

**Senate Bill No. 2475
Substitute A as amended**

**Closing the gender wage gap and expanding
protections beyond gender**

**Senate Bill No. 2638
Substitute A as amended**

Date April 10, 2018

**Senate marks Equal Pay Day by passing bills to address
wage gaps**

Link [Read online](#)

STATE HOUSE – Today is Equal Pay Day — the day symbolizing how far into the year a woman must work, on average, to make as much money as a man made the previous year.

The Senate marked the occasion by passing two measures sponsored by Sen. Gayle L. Goldin and Sen. Maryellen Goodwin to help address pay gaps affecting women and members of minority groups.

“Today we are honoring the spirit of Equal Pay Day in the most appropriate manner possible: by taking concrete steps to equalize wages in Rhode Island. The bills we passed today provide workers a more effective, realistic set of tools for addressing unfair pay practices, and they help our state identify unequal pay where it occurs. Today we are doing more than raising awareness; We are making real progress toward fixing the problem of pay inequality,” said Senator Goldin (D-Dist. 3, Providence).

In Rhode Island, a woman working full-time still makes only 82 cents to the dollar that her male counterpart makes. Women of color are even more deeply affected. Black women in Rhode Island make 59 percent of what their white male counterparts make; for Latinas, the number is even lower—50 percent. On average, Rhode Island working women lose \$9,859 per year to the wage gap—money desperately needed by working families.

“These bills are two important first steps in closing wage gaps. This is a complex problem with lots of causes, including societal biases and expectations that need to change. By identifying where wage gaps exist and how wide they are, and better enabling workers to advocate for themselves, we are pointing our state in the right direction on this issue, moving toward a future where all Rhode Islanders, regardless of gender, race or any other factor, have fair opportunities to support themselves and their families,” said Senate Majority Whip Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence).

[Continue Reading](#)



Press Releases

Economic and Workforce Prosperity

Senate Bill No. 2983

Increasing accountability and transparency during hospital conversions

Date June 25, 2018

General Assembly approves bill to improve transparency in Hospital Conversion Act

Link [Read online](#)

STATE HOUSE — The General Assembly has approved legislation introduced by Senate Majority Leader Michael J. McCaffrey (D-Dist. 29, Warwick) to improve transparency during hospital conversions. The legislation (2018-S-2983) would require the Attorney General and the Department of Health to conduct interviews under oath with a stenographer present when gathering information during conversions.

“Strengthening the information gathering and vetting processes surrounding these massive transactions will only lead to greater transparency and accountability,” said Senator McCaffrey. “Executives and consultants should be held accountable for the representations made during hospital transfers if they are in fact misrepresentations.”

Last week, class action lawsuits were filed in state and federal court against the operators of St. Joseph’s Hospital and Our Lady of Fatima Hospital. Among other allegations, the plaintiffs allege that fraudulent misrepresentations and omissions were made to state regulators.

“The public and all hospital stakeholders deserve honest, forthright disclosure and discussion,” said Leader McCaffrey. “The pensions of thousands of retirees are now in jeopardy because corporations prioritized profits over public health and full disclosure.”

Under the Hospital Conversion Act, the Office of the Attorney General and the Department of Health are tasked with investigating hospital transfers. This includes interviewing hospital officers and gathering testimony to determine the impact of the transfer on the state’s hospital system. This legislation would require that those statements and documents are offered under oath and with a stenographer present.

The measure now moves to the governor’s office.

Rhode Island Senate

invests in

Education



@risenate



@RISenate

Prioritizing New School Construction

Urging districts to fix or replace the state's crumbling public schools

State Budget, Article 9 as amended, Fiscal Year 2019



- 1 The state budget includes a bond question to ask Rhode Island voters in November of 2018 to approve the issuance of \$250 million in state bonds to help school districts build new schools and renovate and repair existing buildings. On average, schools in the state are 56 years old.
- 2 State incentives for districts to build new schools and renovate existing buildings will only be available if voters approve the bond referendum.
- 3 A 2017 engineering report showed Rhode Island schools need \$627.6 million worth of major repairs, but even more—\$2.2 billion—to ensure the schools meet ideal standards.

PRIORITY 1

Mission Critical

Concerns: Deficiencies or conditions that may directly affect the school's ability to remain open or to deliver the educational curriculum.

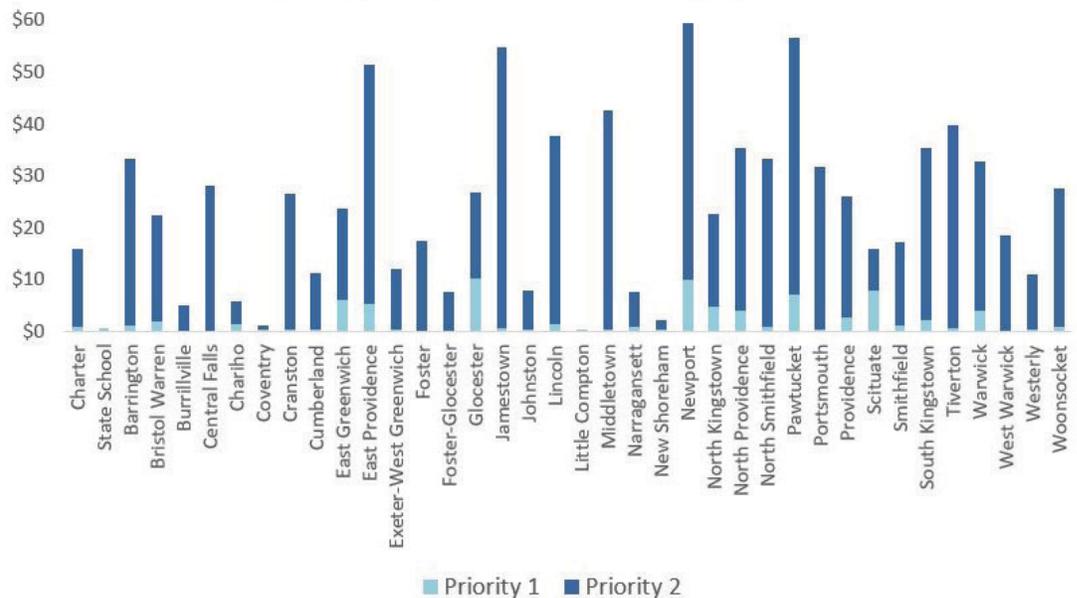
PRIORITY 2

Indirect Impact to

Educational Mission:

Items that may progress to a Priority 1 item if not addressed in the near term.

Cost per Square Foot of Priority 1 & 2 Deficiencies



Data source: RI Department of Education



Protecting Rhode Island taxpayers

4

The Senate worked closely this year with the Governor's Office and the House of Representatives to add taxpayer protections to the Governor's school construction budget proposal, including the following:

- Local communities must commit to paying for regular maintenance of new and renovated school buildings. Over three years, districts would phase in the maintenance expenses they'd be required to include in their school budgets.
- Projects are eligible to receive up to 20 incentive points from the state, as long as that would not increase the state's share of project costs by more than half or decrease the local share of project costs by more than half.
- Certain restrictions limit which projects are eligible for incentives, and they will be awarded only until that pool of incentives expires.
- Efforts are being made to reduce interest costs for school construction projects.
- The state's Auditor General will give guidance to school districts on the uniform financial reporting requirements of construction debt.

“Children can't reach their potential in cold classrooms or under leaky roofs. The way schools are designed and constructed is important, and the way we fund school construction aid needs to reflect the priority we place on quality learning environments. Improving the physical state of our schools continues to be a priority for the Senate, and we are grateful that Governor Raimondo recognizes the critical importance these investments have on the future of our state's economy.”

Senator Hanna M. Gallo, Chairperson of the Senate Committee on Education

[Read more](#)

STATUS

Awaiting Voter Referendum in November of 2018



Investing in Education

Continuing state's commitment to RI Promise Scholarships

State Budget, Article 1 as amended, Fiscal Year 2019

- 1 The budget includes an additional \$3.2 million in general revenue, and nearly \$6 million in total, to fund the second year of the Rhode Island Promise Scholarship program.
 - Established in 2017, the scholarship program provides students with 2 years of tuition and mandatory fees at the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI), a “last-dollar” scholarship that’s calculated after subtracting any grants received by the student.
- 2 The increased funding this fiscal year will provide for two cohorts of students. In the program’s first year, CCRI realized a 43% increase (477 students) in first-time, full-time students, significantly more than the 25% increase projected in the enacted budget.

STATUS

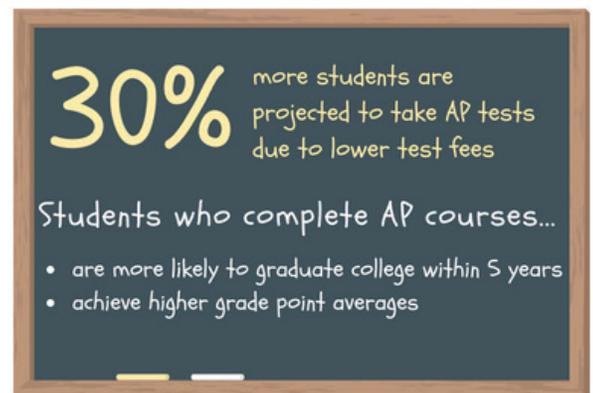
Signed Into Law



Helping low-income students take AP tests

State Budget as amended, Fiscal Year 2019

- 1 The budget includes \$25,000 in general revenue to reduce financial barriers that may prevent students from taking Advanced Placement (AP) exams, by providing subsidized rates to low-income students.
- 2 That state investment brings the total to \$80,000 available for AP tests, which generally cost \$94 each, but are offered by the College Board at reduced rates for low-income students.
- 3 This funding will pay for about 2,100 tests at a subsidized rate of \$38 per test.



Data sources: US Department of Education
RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

STATUS

Signed Into Law



Reflecting on appeal of RI Promise

“I think when you start talking to high school juniors and seniors about—well, just fill out this FAFSA and go sit down with a financial aid officer—it becomes complex and confusing, daunting. When you hang out a shingle that says free college, suddenly that simplifies it.”

Sara Enright, Vice President of Student Affairs and Chief Outcomes Officer at CCRI
[Rhode Island Public Radio report](#)

Increasing state education aid to local districts

State Budget, Article 9 as amended, Fiscal Year 2019

1 The state budget adds \$23.8 million in state education aid for local school districts, bringing the amount of state aid that Rhode Island pays for public schools up to \$975.4 million this year. Local school districts generally contribute additional money to their public schools.

2 Commitments in this year’s state education aid include:

\$928.8 million	in the eighth year of the state’s education funding formula;
\$7.4 million	for districts’ transportation costs;
\$7.4 million	for early childhood investments;
\$4.5 million	for high-cost special education expenses;
\$2.7 million	to help English-Language Learners in the schools; and
\$2 million	to help districts pay for school resource officers.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



Appendix: Education

Senate Bill No. 2052

Gathering data about school social worker caseloads

- This law requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to collect data for one school year from all school districts about specific family contacts, counseling sessions, and meetings that school social workers have about students' individualized education programs.
- The goal is to better understand the type of work and caseloads of all school social workers, in order to provide the basis for informed discussions about the appropriate level of staffing for such workers in Rhode Island's public schools.
- The American School Counselor Association recommends a 250-to-1 student/counselor ratio.

Status: Signed Into Law

Senate Bill No. 2343 Substitute A

Expanding flexibility that exists for charter schools to traditional public schools

- This bill would provide the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education with the authority to waive regulations and certain state statutes that would not affect students' civil rights or health and safety issues.
- The Senate intended to provide the same flexibility from regulations and statutes for traditional public schools as is currently afforded to independent and district charter schools.

Status: Passed the Senate

Senate Resolution No. 2503

Reforming Rhode Island's K-12 education system

- This Senate resolution requests the Rhode Island Board of Education to conduct a comprehensive review of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 and to recommend ways to improve Rhode Island's overall education standards and governance.
- The resolution seeks to determine how Rhode Island could emulate its neighboring state. The Massachusetts public education system has been ranked highest in the United States for many years as a result of comprehensive education reform.

Status: Resolution Was Enacted

Supporting biliteracy efforts in public schools

- This bill would establish a world language and dual language immersion program within the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and would have added a world language and dual language education specialist in the department to support school districts' biliteracy efforts.
- An additional \$200,000 in funding for the department would help the department achieve a goal in its strategic plan to increase opportunities for students to immerse themselves in the study of foreign languages.
- According to a recent study published by the International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, dual language immersion students in the eighth grade were a full academic year ahead in English reading skills, regardless of whether their first language was English or another world language, when compared with their peers in traditional classrooms.

Status: Passed the Senate

Increasing oversight and transparency for state commissioner appointments

- This legislation would provide greater government oversight by requiring the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education to be appointed by the Governor with advice and consent of the Senate. Currently, the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education appoints the Commissioner with advice and consent of the Board of Education.
- The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has approximately 140 full-time equivalent employees and a budget of \$1.4 billion. Therefore, the Senate sought to have the Commissioner appointed by the Governor in the same manner as other governmental department heads.

Status: Passed the Senate

Establishing quality after-school and summer learning opportunities

- This Senate resolution creates a permanent legislative commission to improve and increase the quantity of out-of-school learning programs by providing a forum for communication and sharing of best practices.
- The commission membership will consist of state senators, educational and community leaders, and employees of nonprofits that operate successful after-school programs.

Status: Resolution Was Enacted

Troops to Teachers: Attracting veterans with leadership skills to classrooms

- This law requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to apply for grants to access federal funding for the Troops to Teachers program.
- This program is designed to help service members and veterans begin a new career as K-12 public school teachers by helping them meet the necessary requirements to become teachers.
- No state funds will be used to implement this program.
- More than 20,000 veterans nationally have successfully transitioned to a career in education, the Troops to Teachers program reports. Read more online: <https://proudtoserveagain.com/About/Overview>

Status: Signed Into Law



In the News

Education

Senate Bill No. 2506

R.I. bill would promote dual-language education

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Two Providence legislators have proposed a bill to add a position at the Rhode Island Department of Education to coordinate and promote the creation of more dual-language programs in public schools, which the sponsors say boost overall academic proficiency as well as language skills.

Source The Providence Journal

Date April 25, 2018

Author Linda Borg

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Two Providence legislators have proposed a bill to add a position at the Rhode Island Department of Education to coordinate and promote the creation of more dual-language programs in public schools.

Currently, four school districts — Providence, Pawtucket, Central Falls and South Kingstown — offer instruction in two languages, typically English and Spanish. The International Charter School in Pawtucket is built on the concept of teaching students in more than one language.

Continue Reading on: <http://www.providencejournal.com/news/20180425/ri-bill-would-promote-dual-language-education>



In the News

Education

State Budget, Article 9 as amended, Fiscal Year 2019

R.I. Senate passes \$250M school-renovation bill

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — The Rhode Island Senate voted Thursday to approve a bill that includes \$250 million for school renovations and repairs, according to the group, Fix Our Schools.

Source The Providence Journal

Date May 31, 2018

Author Linda Borg

The vote was 35-0.

“This is the first step toward the passage of the proposed school construction bond, as budget discussions continue,” said a statement from Save Our Schools, a grass-roots organization created to repair and rebuild the state’s aging schools. “Throughout this week, Fix Our Schools RI rolled out official endorsements from members of the General Assembly via the social media platforms, Twitter and Facebook.”

Continue Reading on: <http://www.providencejournal.com/news/20180531/ri-senate-passes-250m-school-renovation-bill>

State officials propose plan to borrow millions for new school construction

COVENTRY — Rhode Island General Treasurer Seth Magaziner has been visiting towns across the state recently to talk about school construction, and present the state School Building Task Force’s plan for “once-in-a-generation” spending on Rhode Island’s public schools.

Source The Pawtucket Times

Date March 29, 2018

Author Kendra Port

The task force, co-chaired by Magaziner and Education Commissioner Ken Wagner, recommended the issuance of a half-billion dollars in general obligation debt for school construction following a statewide facilities assessment completed by Jacobs Engineering. The assessment is known as the Jacobs Report. According to the report, the state’s schools have more than \$2.2 billion in deficiencies, \$600 million of which is for immediate needs.

Continue Reading on: https://www.pawtuckettimes.com/news/state-officials-propose-plan-to-borrow-millions-for-new-school/article_293b93ea-3300-11e8-9696-775246c8670f.html



In the News

Education

R.I.'s problem with crumbling schools goes way beyond the urban core

Crumbling schools aren't just an urban problem. A 2017 analysis of Rhode Island's school buildings found R.I.'s greatest needs reach well outside the capital city and its neighbors—and into some of the state's most affluent communities.

Source The Providence Journal

Date May 11, 2018

Author Linda Borg

During January's deep freeze, at least four public schools in Rhode Island were closed due to broken water pipes.

A Cranston elementary school was evacuated when a water main ruptured, flooding the first floor.

At Cranston High School East, more than \$100,000 worth of computer equipment was ruined when a window with a broken lock blew open and the pipes froze, flooding three classrooms and shutting down an entire wing for three days.

Continue Reading on: <http://www.providencejournal.com/news/20180511/ris-problem-with-crumbling-schools-goes-way-beyond-urban-core>

How some districts are taking steps to save local schools

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (WPRI) -- Gov. Gina Raimondo has pitched a sweeping proposal to spend up to \$1 billion over a 10-year period to fix or rebuild local schools.

Source Channel 12 WPRI-TV

Date May 23, 2018

Authors Mike Montecalvo and Nick Domings

But cities and towns would also have to contribute, paying half of that price tag.

While ground is being broken on new school buildings in Barrington and North Providence, other districts are doing total or partial re-builds, trying to get schools into the 21st century.

Continue Reading on: <https://www.wpri.com/news/special-reports/how-some-districts-are-taking-steps-to-save-local-schools/1195056631>

Rhode Island Senate

continues

Fighting the Opioid Epidemic



@risenate



@RISenate

Prevention

Stopping the opioid crisis demands a multi-pronged approach that addresses prevention, rescue, treatment, and recovery—all of which were priorities at the State House in 2018 and will continue to guide the Senate in future years.

Senate Bill No. 2896



Protecting against accidental overdose deaths

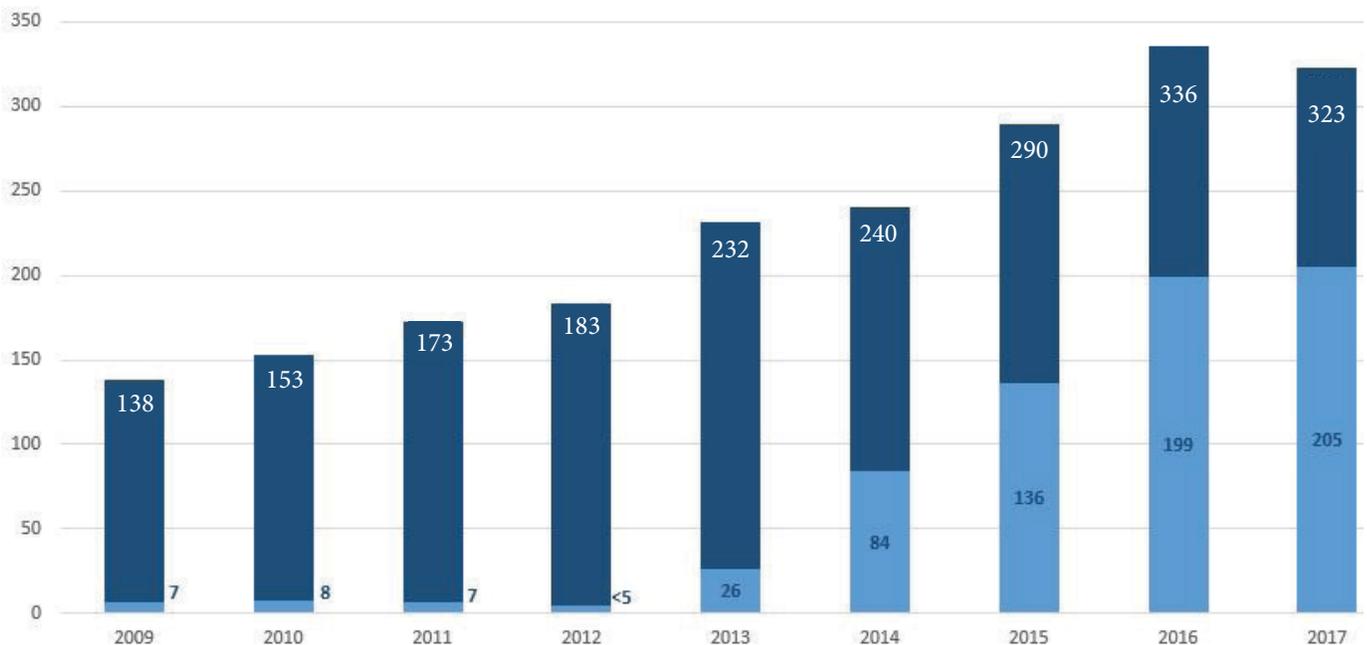
- 1 Fentanyl is a highly potent opioid that is often added to drugs sold on the black market. It has become the leading cause of overdose deaths in Rhode Island.
- 2 People buying opioids frequently don't even realize the drugs have been laced with deadly fentanyl.
- 3 This law allows the use of fentanyl test strips to help people determine whether drugs they obtain include fentanyl. At about \$1 each, these test strips are a cost-effective way to prevent overdose deaths.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



Overdose Deaths due to Fentanyl



Source: Prevent Overdose RI

■ Fentanyl Deaths ■ Total Overdose Deaths

Senate Bill No. 2346

Meeting the mental health needs of public higher education students

- 1 This law makes it a priority to increase the timeliness of and access to mental health services at each of Rhode Island’s public higher education institutions.
- 2 The University of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, and the Community College of Rhode Island will draft action plans to provide timely mental health services for their students through on-campus and off-campus service providers.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



Senate Bill No. 2182

Educating students on substance use disorders and suicide prevention

- 1 This law requires Rhode Island public schools to incorporate evidence-based, age-appropriate education about substance use disorders and suicide prevention into the health curriculum for all students in grades one through twelve.
- 2 The Senate Committee on Health & Human Services recommended this bill after holding multiple Mental Health oversight hearings to ensure that effective prevention efforts start as early as possible in students’ educations.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



Rescue

Senate Bill No. 3004 Substitute A



Preventing overdose deaths

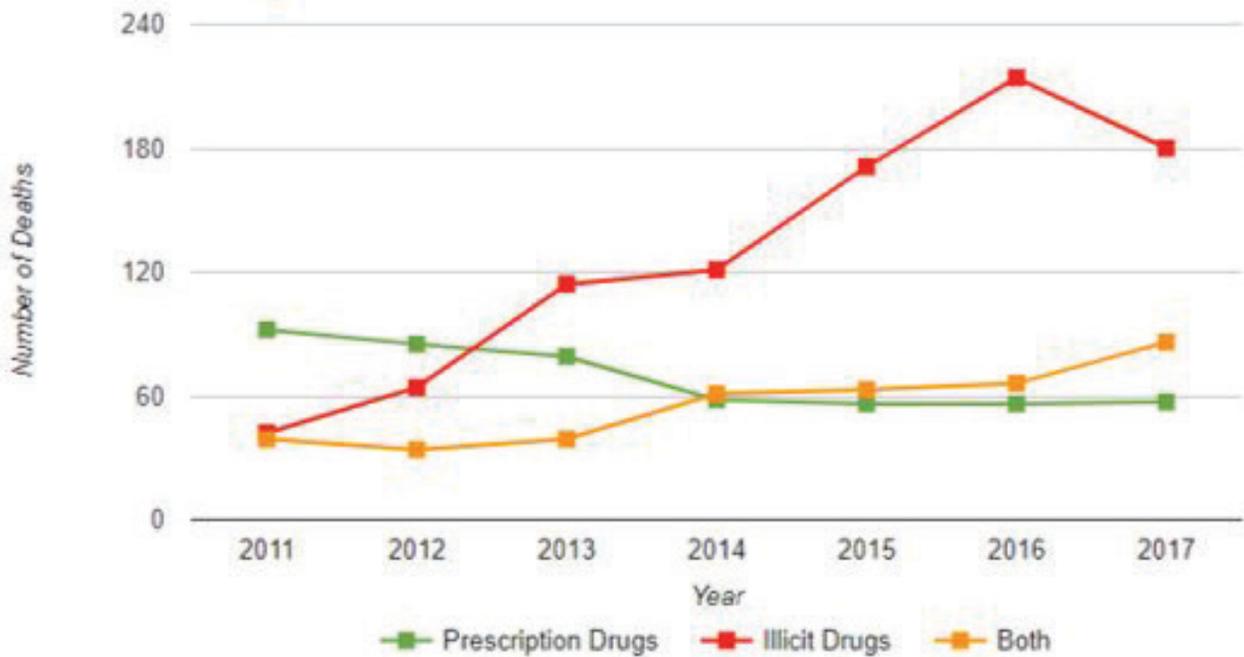
- 1 This law aims to decrease opioid overdose deaths by increasing access to naloxone, which is a medication used to reverse the effects of an overdose.
- 2 Law enforcement and emergency medical personnel may give naloxone kits to individuals at risk of a future overdose or to their family members.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



Accidental Drug-Related Overdose Deaths by Type of Drug



Source: RI Department of Health

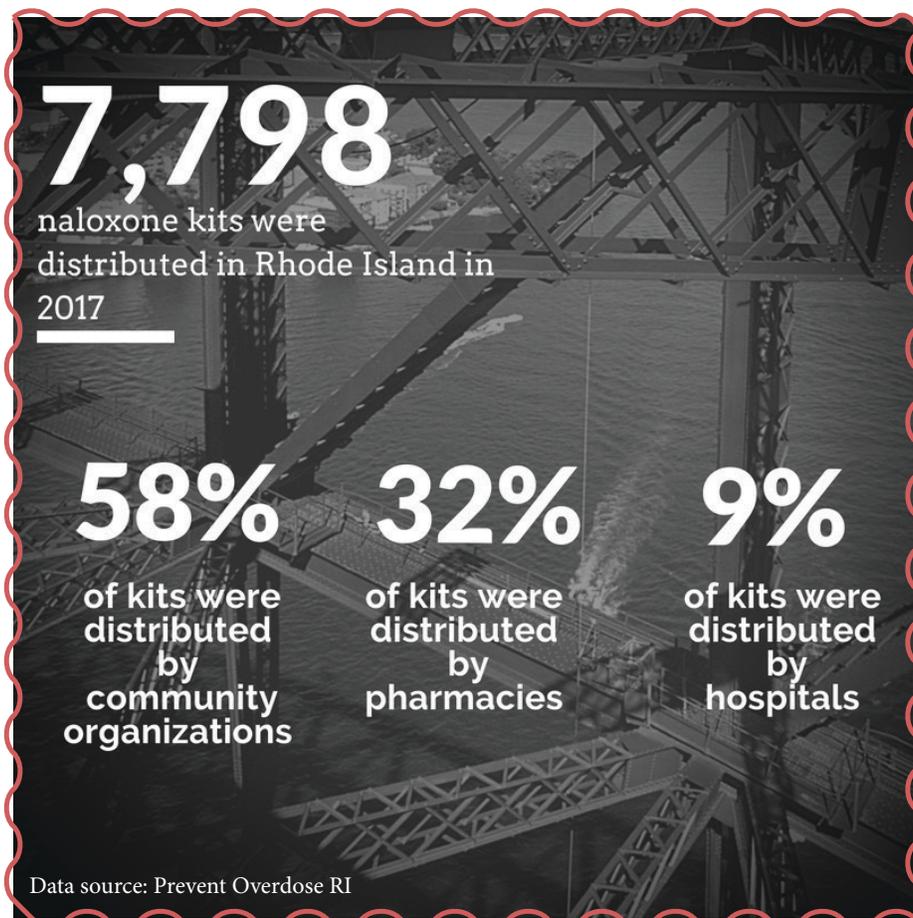
Senate Bill No. 2930

Increasing access to life-saving naloxone

- 1 The goal of this law is to decrease opioid overdose deaths by increasing individual and community access to naloxone, an opioid overdose reversal medication.
- 2 The Department of Health will develop and distribute guidelines regarding prescribing naloxone when also prescribing an opioid, referred to as “co-prescribing.”
- 3 The Department of Health and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services will develop strategies that will allow for naloxone that is dispensed in non-pharmacy settings to be eligible for health insurance reimbursement.

STATUS

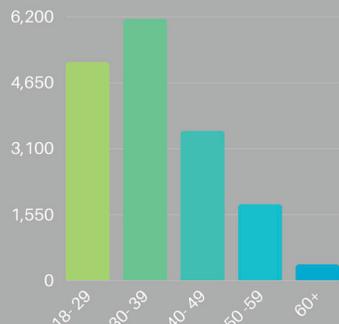
Signed Into Law



Treatment and Recovery

Senate Bill No. 2540 Substitute A as amended

Number of Treatment Admissions
by Age Group (2011 - 2017)



Addiction treatment data from Prevent Overdose RI

Ensuring mental health parity

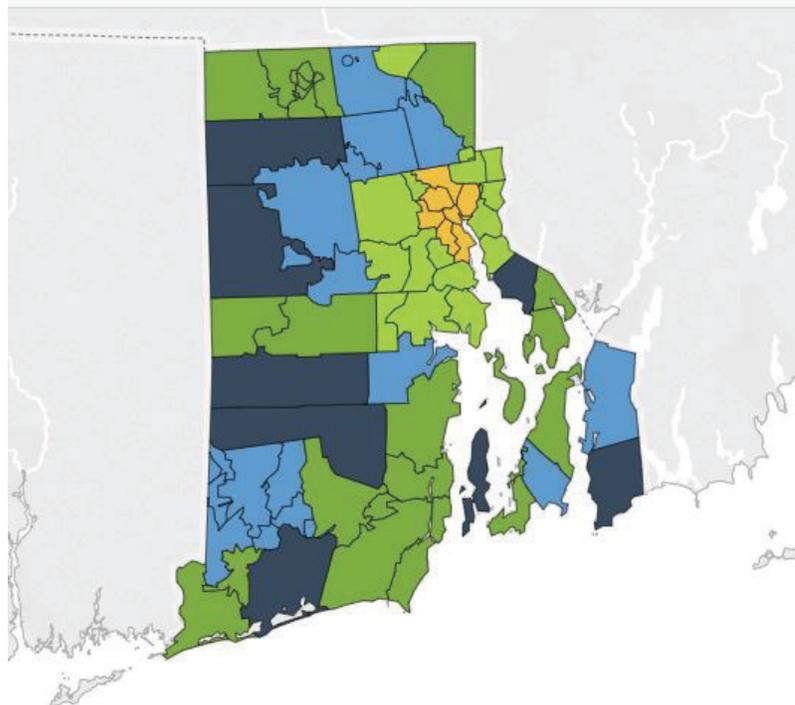
- 1 This law seeks to create greater parity between primary healthcare and behavioral healthcare insurance coverage.
- 2 Health insurers will apply primary care cost-sharing requirements to behavioral healthcare counseling and medication-assisted treatment.
- 3 The Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner has more clearly defined responsibilities to oversee behavioral health parity and integration and will issue a future report on the impact of these changes on health insurance premiums.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



Overdose Deaths by City/Town (2014 to 2017)



Number of Overdoses

- 1 to 5
- 6 to 10
- 11 to 25
- 26 to 100
- More than 100

Source: Prevent Overdose RI

Senate Bill No. 2539 as amended

Protecting individuals in recovery

- 1 The intent of this law is to give people the choice to not be prescribed opiates.
- 2 Individuals in recovery from substance use disorders can remain opiate-free by exercising this option.
- 3 The Department of Health will establish a procedure for individuals to file a revocable, voluntary non-opiate directive form.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



“The opioid crisis has touched individuals and families in all walks of life across Rhode Island. This epidemic demands that we employ a comprehensive, forward-thinking strategy to save lives and make our communities safer.”
Senator Michael J. McCaffrey, Senate Majority Leader

Where can you turn for help?

Call (401) 942-STOP if you or someone you know is battling opioid addiction.

The Hope & Recovery Support Line is operated 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, as a way for you to connect with a licensed counselor and get help.

For more details about state efforts to help people who are battling addiction, go online:

<http://preventoverdoseri.org/get-help/>

**However, if you see someone is not breathing or you think that individual is overdosing:
Call 9-1-1.**

Appendix: Fighting the Opioid Epidemic

Senate Bill No. 2025 Substitute A as amended

Redirecting funds for drug-awareness programs

- This bill would redirect money from civil fines for certain drug offenses and for speeding violations to be expended by the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals on substance use disorders and student assistance programs for youth.
- The department would identify criteria for effective substance use disorder prevention programs, establish criteria for the distribution of funds, allot funds to schools for substance use disorder assistance programs, and institute a reporting requirement for municipalities that receive funds.

Status: Passed the Senate

Senate Bill No. 2225 as amended

Helping people with substance use disorders get professional treatment

- This law directs the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals to certify a list of qualified chemical dependency professionals licensed by the Department of Health.
- This list will be made available to other state agencies so they can help refer individuals with substance use disorders to health professionals.

Status: Signed Into Law

Senate Bill No. 2279 Substitute B

“Kristen’s Law” creates harsher penalties for drug deals resulting in lethal overdoses

- This law makes it a felony to deal a controlled substance that results in a lethal overdose.
- The crime carries a sentence of up to life in prison, which is at the discretion of the judge.
- Rhode Island has not had a statute to address all instances of unlawful delivery of controlled substances that result in death. Prosecutors have had to apply first-degree felony murder or second-degree murder charges where applicable.
- This law is modeled after a similar statute that exists for those who provide lethal drugs to minors. The law is named in memory of Kristen Coutu, who overdosed after being dealt pure fentanyl.

Status: Signed Into Law

Preventing addiction

- This law empowers patients to limit the amount of controlled substances dispensed to them at one time, helping to reduce the amount of opioids in the community.
- Pharmacists can now dispense a Schedule II controlled substance as a “partial fill,” a quantity less than the entire prescription, if requested by patient or prescriber. This option aims to reduce the amount of opioids in the community.
- Full prescriptions can be dispensed within 30 days from the original date the medication was prescribed, but prescriptions expire on day 31.

Status: Signed Into Law

Improving access to treatment

- This bill aims to increase access to recovery services for individuals with substance use disorders.
- If residential or inpatient care is deemed appropriate, a treatment plan would need to be submitted to the health insurer, including length of stay. A patient would remain presumptively covered for residential or inpatient services during the health insurance review process.
- Based on federal HIPAA guidance, healthcare providers would be allowed to disclose protected health information to people who are believed to be able to protect the patient.

Status: Passed the Senate

Improving substance use disorder services

- This bill would further expand the comprehensive discharge planning requirements of 2016’s Alexander Perry and Brandon Goldner Act.
- The Department of Health and the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals would implement and maintain a real-time database for substance use disorder services.
- These state agencies would develop a program to offer financial incentives to hospitals and free-standing emergency care facilities that achieve Level 1 certification for treating overdose and opioid use disorder.
- Emergency facilities would be required to incorporate patient consent for peer recovery services into a comprehensive consent form.

Status: Passed the Senate

Reducing overdose deaths

- The goal of this law is to reduce overdose deaths by requiring the Office of State Medical Examiners to convene a multi-disciplinary team to review emerging trends in overdose deaths.
- Through 2020, this team will examine trends and report its activities, findings, and recommendations annually to the General Assembly and Governor's Office.

Status: Signed Into Law



In the News

Fighting the Opioid Crisis

Senate Bill No. 2279 Substitute B

R.I. Senate OKs life sentences in drug fatalities

Also passed were bills including putting electronic cigarettes under the same laws as conventional smokes and having public schools include “age appropriate” instruction on consent before sexual activity.

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — As the General Assembly worked through what members hoped would be the session’s penultimate night, the Senate Thursday night passed an array of bills to allow life sentences for drug dealers when someone they sold drugs to dies, put electronic cigarettes under the same laws as conventional smokes and have public schools include “age appropriate” instruction on consent before sexual activity.

Source The Providence Journal

Date June 21, 2018

Authors John Hill and Katherine Gregg

The bill that would allow life sentences for someone who sells a lethal dose of a controlled substance passed the Senate 25-8.

Sen. Frank S. Lombardi, D-Cranston, like other supporters of the bill, recalled the heartbreaking testimony the Judiciary Committee members heard while deliberating the bill. The possibility of sentencing a drug dealer to life in prison for selling a fatal dose of a controlled substance was a needed step to combat the state’s growing opioid crisis, he said. Judiciary Committee Chairwoman Erin Lynch Prata, D-Warwick, said if a drug dealer sells a drug that kills someone, that dealer is responsible for that death.

Continue Reading on: <http://www.providencejournal.com/news/20180621/ri-senate-oks-life-sentences-in-drug-fatalities>



In the News

Fighting the Opioid Crisis

Senate Bill No. 2346

R.I. bill to help college students with mental-health needs advances

The legislation is partly in response to rising suicide rates among young people.

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — The state Senate has approved legislation that would require the Community College of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College and the University of Rhode Island to establish plans to address “the mental health needs” of their students “in a timely fashion.” The legislation now heads to the Rhode Island House.

Source The Providence Journal

Date March 23, 2018

Author G. Wayne Miller

Introduced by Sen. V. Susan Sosnowski, a Democrat who represents South Kingstown and Block Island, the legislation would require the schools to develop policies and training to “advise students, faculty, and staff, including residence hall staff, of the proper procedures for identifying the needs of a student exhibiting suicidal tendencies or behavior, and, where appropriate, provide training for addressing said needs.”

Continue Reading on: <http://www.providencejournal.com/news/20180323/ri-bill-to-help-college-students-with-mental-health-needs-advances>

Senate Bill No. 2896

Senate passes bill legalizing fentanyl test strips

The Senate passed legislation on Tuesday that would legalize the possession and distribution of test strips to detect fentanyl laced in heroin and other illicit drugs

Source Rhode Island Public Radio

Date June 6, 2018

Author Lynn Arditi

The vote was 34:0 with three members not voting.

The bill, introduced by Senate Majority Leader Michael J. McCaffrey, D-Warwick, would pave the way for distribution of this cheap, low-tech tool to prevent fatal overdoses. Studies show the strips -- which are similar to a home pregnancy test -- cost about \$1 each and can detect fentanyl in very small doses.

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine. Nearly 60 percent of all overdose deaths in Rhode Island have been linked to fentanyl.

Continue Reading on: <http://ripr.org/post/senate-passes-bill-legalizing-fentanyl-test-strips#stream/0>



Press Releases

Fighting the Opioid Crisis

Senate Bill No. 2182

Educating students on substance use disorders and suicide prevention

Date July 3, 2018

Sen. Miller and Rep. O'Brien bill that requires drug abuse and suicide prevention in health education curriculum signed into law

Link [Read online](#)

STATE HOUSE –Sen. Joshua Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence) and Rep. William W. O'Brien's (D-Dist. 54, North Providence) legislation (2018-S 2182 / 2018-H 7987) that requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to incorporate substance abuse and suicide prevention education into the health education curriculum was signed into law by the governor.

“Almost every day, we are confronted with yet another tragedy concerning our children resulting from suicide or drug overdoses and this trend must end. This legislation will give our kids the proper tools and education to protect themselves, their families and their classmates from the suffering that results from suicide and drug abuse,” said Senator Miller.

“There is a tragic epidemic of our children abusing drugs and committing suicide and it is imperative that we give them the tools and education to not only protect themselves, but also those children around them as well. We cannot fail our children any longer and this bill will ensure that our kids know not only about the dangers of this behavior but more importantly, the signs and triggers that cause this destructive behavior to manifest,” said Representative O'Brien.

The legislation states that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education shall incorporate, in consultation with the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals, substance abuse prevention and suicide prevention into the health education curriculum. Substance abuse prevention is defined as the implementation of evidence-based, age appropriate programs, practices, or curricula related to the use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

Suicide prevention is defined as the implementation of evidence-based appropriate programs, practices, or curricula related to mental health awareness and suicide prevention.



Press Releases

Fighting the Opioid Crisis

Senate Bill No. 2346

Meeting the mental health needs of public higher education students

Date June 23, 2018

General Assembly passes bill that would require colleges to develop suicide prevention policies

Link [Read online](#)

STATE HOUSE — The General Assembly has approved legislation introduced by Sen. V. Susan Sosnowski (D-Dist. 37, South Kingstown, New Shoreham) and House Majority Whip John G. Edwards (D-Dist. 70, Portsmouth, Tiverton) that would require each public institution of postsecondary education to establish a plan for addressing the mental health needs of its students.

The bill (2018-S 2346, 2018-H 8342), which would require each institution to develop policies aimed at identifying a student exhibiting suicidal behavior or tendencies, now moves to the governor's office.

“Rising rates have lifted suicide to the 10th leading cause of death in the United States,” said Senator Sosnowski. “This legislation will help institutions of higher learning to identify vulnerable individuals and connect them with treatment and other supports. It will also lead to the training of educators and support staff to recognize risk factors for suicide and help those at risk to access support services. With so much tragedy coming from college campuses, this is an issue that cannot be ignored.”

The bill is the latest policy measure designed to address suicide prevention. Last year, the General Assembly passed a law that requires the Department of Education to consider incorporating into the curriculum programs related to suicide prevention.

“This legislation comes at a critical moment,” said Representative Edwards. “While the rates of many other leading causes of death, including heart disease and stroke, have declined, suicides are on the rise, with rates increasing by more than 25 percent between 2000 and 2015, according to the Centers for Disease Control. It’s an important issue that needs to be addressed.”



Press Releases

Fighting the Opioid Crisis

**Senate Bill No. 2539
as amended**

Protecting individuals in recovery

Date June 23, 2018

General Assembly approves bills empowering patients to curb possibility of opioid addiction

Link [Read online](#)

STATE HOUSE — The General Assembly today passed two pieces of legislation introduced by Speaker of the House Nicholas A. Mattiello (D-Dist. 15, Cranston) and Sen. Joshua Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence) that would empower patients to curb the possibility of opiate addiction. Both bills now head to the governor's office.

The first bill (2018-H 7416, 2018-S 2541) would give patients the option of only partially filling their prescription for painkillers. It would allow a pharmacist to dispense a partial fill of a Schedule II controlled substance at the request of either the patient or the prescriber.

“The opioid epidemic is one of the biggest tragedies of our time, and finding new ways to tackle it continues to be a challenge,” said Speaker Mattiello. “This legislation will allow and encourage prescribers, patients and pharmacists to work together, and empower patients to limit the number of unused pills that are left in their medicine chests, which is where opioid addiction begins.”

Under the provisions of the legislation, subsequent fills would have to be dispensed at the same pharmacy where the original prescription was partially filled, and the total quantity dispensed could not exceed the total quantity prescribed. After 30 days, the prescription would expire.

The second bill (2018-H 7496A, 2018-S 2539) would establish a procedure for individuals to file a revocable voluntary non-opiate directive form with the patient's licensed health care practitioner. The form would indicate to all practitioners that the patient would not be administered or offered a prescription or medication order for an opiate.

“We have to take a multi-pronged approach to limit the quantity of opioids that are on the market,” said Senator Miller, who chairs the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services. “The problem with opioids is that they hang out in a lot of people's medicine cabinets, so it will take a combination of efforts, such as these two bills to rein in what has become a serious problem.”

[Continue Reading](#)



Press Releases

Fighting the Opioid Crisis

Senate Bill No. 2540 Substitute A as amended

Creating mental health parity

Date May 22, 2018

Senate OKs Seveney bill to include behavioral counseling as a primary care visit in health insurance plans

Link [Read online](#)

STATE HOUSE — The Senate today passed legislation introduced by Sen. James A. Seveney (D-Dist. 11, Portsmouth, Bristol, Tiverton) that would require health insurers to include behavioral health counseling as a primary care visit.

Under the provisions of the bill (2018-S 2540Aaa) behavioral health counseling visits and medication maintenance visits would be included as primary care visits for patient cost-sharing requirements under the provisions of a health plan.

“There are certain constraints on the health care system when it comes to mental health,” said Senator Seveney. “This legislation looks to improve mental illness prevention and intervention by ensuring parity of cost sharing as it pertains to behavioral counseling visits.”

The legislation would also require the Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner to include in an annual report to the governor and General Assembly recommendations to ensure the health insurance coverage of behavioral health care under the same terms and conditions as other health care, and to integrate behavioral health parity requirements into the insurance oversight and health care transformation efforts.

“By making sure the foundation of mental health care is a solid one, we can build upon it to improve the health care needs of all Rhode Islanders,” said Senator Seveney. “This is an important step in better integrating behavioral health and primary care.”

The measure now moves to the House of Representatives, where similar legislation (2018-H 7806) has been introduced by Rep. Grace Diaz (D-Dist. 11, Providence).



Press Releases

Fighting the Opioid Crisis

Senate Bill No. 2896

Protecting against accidental overdose deaths

Date June 5, 2018

Senate passes McCaffrey legislation that would allow fentanyl test strips to prevent overdose deaths

Link [Read online](#)

STATE HOUSE — The Senate today passed legislation introduced by Majority Leader Michael J. McCaffrey (D-Dist. 29, Warwick) to codify the legality of fentanyl testing strips. Fentanyl is a powerful opioid that is the leading driver of overdose deaths in Rhode Island.

The legislation (2018-S 2896) would allow distribution and utilization of narcotic testing products to assist persons in determining whether drugs contain toxic substances. Narcotic testing products include fentanyl testing strips.

“First and foremost, we’re concerned with saving lives,” said Senator McCaffrey. “The Opioid Crisis has touched individuals and families in all walks of life across Rhode Island. This epidemic demands that we employ a comprehensive, forward thinking strategy to save lives and make our communities safer.”

This bill would also provide those distributing testing products with protection from civil liability or criminal prosecution.

The foundation of the proposed legislation is drawn from two recent Rhode Island-based research studies led by a team of professionals, including by Dr. Traci Green and Dr. Brandon Marshall of the Brown University School of Public Health, which highlighted the benefits of this type of public health intervention.

The studies found that fentanyl test strips are:

- A cost-effective way to prevent an overdose. The test strips cost about \$1 per strip and are sensitive to detect fentanyl in very small doses.
- Supported by professionals throughout the health care system, including: primary care doctors, school nurses, mental health and substance use professionals, hospital emergency departments, law enforcement professionals, and first responders.
- A public health and information-based approach to the overdose epidemic, rather than ineffective, punitive measures that perpetuate the failed war on drugs.

The measure now moves to the House of Representatives, where similar legislation (2018-H 8132) has been introduced by Rep. Aaron Regunberg (D-Dist. 4, Providence).



Press Releases

Fighting the Opioid Crisis

Senate Bill No. 2930 & Senate Bill No. 3004 Substitute A

Preventing overdose deaths

Date July 10, 2018

Two new laws will increase Narcan availability to prevent overdose deaths

Link [Read online](#)

STATE HOUSE – Two bills passed by the General Assembly to help prevent opioid overdose deaths through increased access to Narcan have been signed into law.

The first bill (2018-S 2930, 2018-H 8313), sponsored by Senate Health and Human Services Committee Chairman Joshua Miller and Rep. David A. Bennett, requires the Department of Health to develop and distribute best practices guidelines for “co-prescribing” naloxone — the opioid-overdose antidote commonly known by its trade name, Narcan — when also prescribing an opioid to patients who are at an elevated risk of overdosing. It requires the development of strategies for practitioners in non-pharmacy settings to prescribe and dispense naloxone while ensuring health insurance reimbursement.

“The American Medical Association encourages physicians to consider co-prescribing Narcan to patients who are taking opioids whenever it’s clinically appropriate, because having that antidote readily available saves lives. We can help prevent needless overdose deaths here in Rhode Island by having the Department of Health provide doctors with guidelines to assist them in identifying high-risk situations and encourage them to co-prescribe Narcan so it’s ready if it’s needed,” said Senator Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence).

Said Representative Bennett (D-Dist. 20, Warwick, Cranston), “This is one more tool for saving lives from the opioid epidemic. Opioid addiction and overdoses are a complicated public health crisis, and we have to address it from every possible angle, from insurance coverage to preventing deaths by making sure Narcan is available quickly when someone overdoses. Both these bills are ways we can get Narcan into the hands of people who might overdose, or in the possession of their family or friends, so it’s available if the worst happens.”

The second bill (2018-H 8333A, 2018-S 3004A) amends the state’s Good Samaritan law to allow police and medical personnel to provide naloxone with instructions for its use to individuals who are at substantial risk for an overdose, or a family member or friend.

[Continue Reading](#)

Rhode Island Senate

believes in

Good Government
and
Consumer Protection



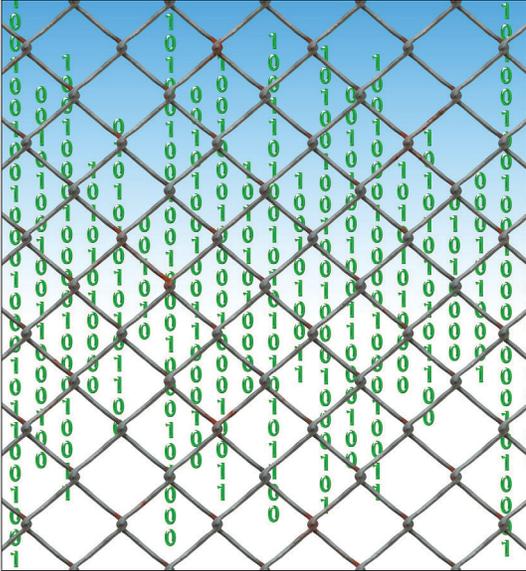
@risenate



@RISenate

Consumer Protection

Senate Bill No. 2008 Substitute A



Maintaining net neutrality with state contracts

- 1 This bill would require the state to award internet service contracts only to providers that maintain core principles of net neutrality.
- 2 This legislation was a direct result of the recent repeal of net neutrality rules by the Federal Communications Commission, and it matches the Governor's Executive Order issued in April of 2018 to protect net neutrality principles.
- 3 State divisions would be responsible for evaluating and advising the Governor about ways to promote net neutrality.

STATUS

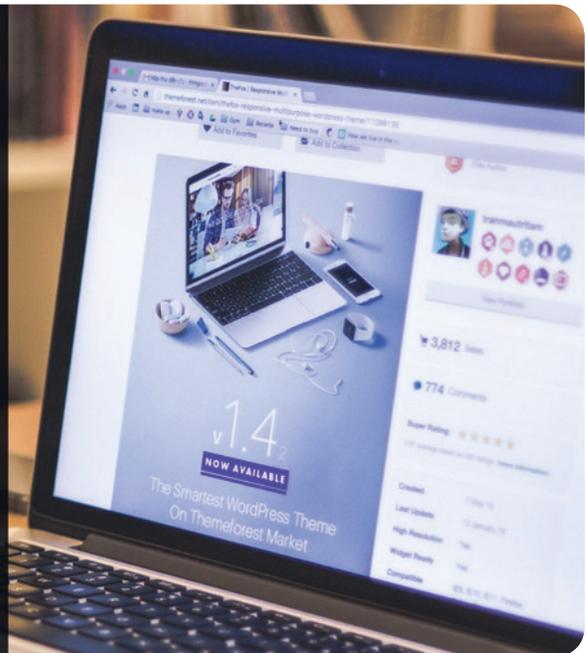
Passed the Senate



WHAT DOES NET NEUTRALITY MEAN?

It's about protecting access to a free and open internet. Net neutrality tenets prohibit the following:

- Blocking of lawful content or applications on the internet
- Throttling or impairing lawful internet traffic
- Offering paid prioritization of content or applications
- Interfering unreasonably with a user's ability to access lawful content or applications



Why do internet users want net neutrality?

“Imagine the phone company barring you from receiving certain phone calls based on the content of what the person on the other line wanted to tell you. ... The phone company can’t do these things because it is what is known as a ‘common carrier.’ ... It means you don’t get a slower connection to the local pizza place down the street because Pizza Hut is paying the phone company to route your call faster to them. It is this status as applied to the internet that the FCC has repealed.”

Steven Brown, Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Rhode Island

Senate Bill No. 2562



Ensuring free credit freezes for consumers

- 1 This law prohibits credit agencies from charging fees to consumers who freeze their credit reports.
- 2 Consumers have turned to freezing credit reports as a way to protect against identity theft when their personal information may have been compromised due to a security breach. Such freezes are considered a stronger form of consumer protection than fraud alerts because credit agencies cannot give out personal information once a freeze has been initiated.
- 3 Previously, credit reporting companies could charge various fees for such credit freezes.

STATUS

Signed Into Law

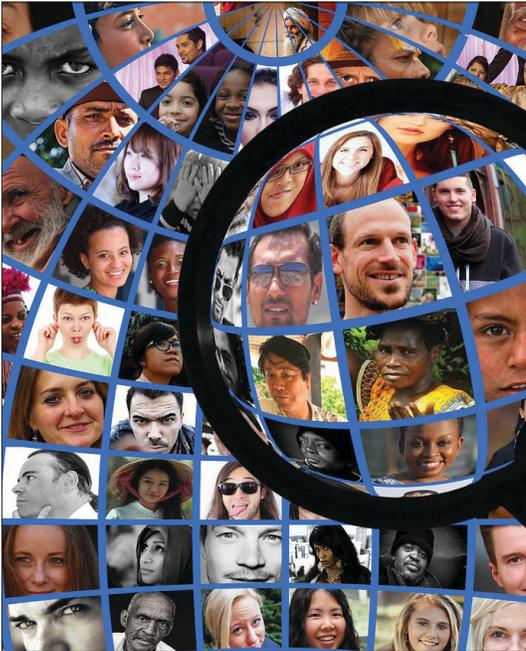


“The issue of costs associated with security freezes came to light after the massive Equifax data breach, where the company initially charged consumers who were impacted by the breach to place a security freeze with Equifax.”

Peter F. Kilmartin, Attorney General of Rhode Island

Good Government

Senate Resolution No. 3002



Ensuring Census 2020 counts every Rhode Islander

- 1 This resolution requests that the Governor create a “Rhode Island Complete Count Committee” to ensure an accurate counting of Rhode Islanders in the 2020 Census.
- 2 U.S. Congressional seats are apportioned according to states’ populations as counted by the U.S. Census Bureau. The federal government also uses Census data to allocate federal funds for such crucial programs as Title 1 grants, Head Start, and transportation funding.
- 3 The committee will include elected officials, delegates from stakeholder groups, and members of the general public. Several other states have established Census committees to coordinate efforts to encourage participation in the Census.

STATUS

Resolution Was Enacted



“Perhaps most importantly, the Census is a critical cog in the machinery of our democracy. It’s the starting point for drawing congressional, state, and local voting districts, which are required by the Constitution to provide everyone with equal representation. Here in Rhode Island, we could actually lose one of our two Congressional seats if our population does not grow, so it’s especially vital that every single resident is counted.”

John Marion, Executive Director of Common Cause Rhode Island
[Providence Journal Op-ed piece](#)



Senate Resolution No. 2967



Adopting new Senate rules for member expulsion

1

The Senate adapted its rules regarding the expulsion of one of its own members, should the chamber consider taking such a step.

2

The Senate decided to update its rules after Senate President Dominick J. Ruggiero called for the expulsion of a senator who faced criminal charges. That senator resigned before an expulsion process began.

3

The new rules say this “extraordinary power of expulsion generally should be reserved for very serious breaches of legal or ethical responsibilities of members.”

4

The rules outline how a complaint to expel a member would be handled and investigated. The Senate Committee on Judiciary will afford the senator due process, including properly served notice of hearings, the right to testify and refute the allegations, and the right to present evidence.

STATUS

Resolution Was Enacted



Cutting Red Tape

Senate Bill No. 2502 Substitute B

Eliminating onerous requirements for food trucks

- 1 This law standardizes the registration and licensing requirements for mobile food establishments to make it easier for food and beverage trucks to do business in Rhode Island.
- 2 As this industry continues to grow, this law is expected to allow mobile food operators to move easily between municipalities and to avoid what could be a costly, time-consuming process that made it difficult to do business in more than one city or town.
- 3 Once the state verifies that a mobile food business meets certain standards, such as obtaining a food safety license and a fire safety permit, the operator can apply to municipalities for permits.
- 4 Municipalities may still enforce their own requirements, including the locations where the businesses can operate, hours of operation, and acceptable noise levels.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



Data source: FoodTrucksIn.com

Senate Bill No. 3006

Making it easier to do business in Rhode Island

- 1 This law eliminates a variety of unnecessary licensing requirements for various business entities.
- 2 These changes include:
 - Allowing electronic signatures for retail licenses;
 - Removing requirements for various health providers and therapists to verify “by oath” or affidavit that they meet certain professional standards; and
 - Eliminating a \$25 filing fee for residents or owners of mobile and manufactured housing parks if they file a complaint with the Department of Business Regulation.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



Senate Bill No. 2763 Substitute B

Simplifying the commercial driver’s license application process



- 1 This law allows individuals to submit required medical records electronically instead of requiring them to submit the documents in person at the Division of Motor Vehicles.
- 2 People seeking commercial driver’s licenses can now avoid potentially long wait times at the division by submitting their medical certificates online.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



Appendix: Good Government & Consumer Protection

Senate Bill No. 2026

Assessing the community impact of waste management facilities

- This new law includes a proposed waste management facility's potential detrimental impact on the community as a factor to be considered when approving the construction or operation of a solid waste management facility.
- Both the director of the Department of Environmental Management and the State Planning Council must assess and weigh the community impact of any proposed waste management facility prior to granting licensing approval.

Status: Signed Into Law

Senate Bill No. 2048 Substitute A

Notifying policy holders of options when life insurance policies lapse

- This law requires life insurance companies to provide a notice of available options to policy holders when policies expire.
- The Department of Business Regulation will provide disclosure notices to life insurance companies at no cost to those companies.

Status: Signed Into Law

Senate Bill No. 2086

Assisting businesses affected by Newport Bridge roadwork

- This law requires the Department of Transportation and the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation to coordinate with each other to inform and help small businesses that will be affected by the Rhode Works construction project realigning the Newport Bridge ramps.
- The department will determine which businesses will be affected by the work, and it will share that information during construction season with the Commerce Corporation, allowing at least two months for Commerce to assist affected businesses.

Status: Signed Into Law

Ensuring town representation on charter school boards

- This bill would require representation on charter school boards for each school district that sends 5% or more of a charter school's student body. The school committee of that district would appoint a member or designee to the charter school's governing board.
- The purpose would be to provide improved transparency of the charter school's operations; to provide a voice to the local school committee and greater accountability of tax dollars from the sending communities; and to act as the liaison to the traditional public school.
- Some charter and traditional public schools have shared model practices with each other. This additional step was intended to allow for even greater sharing of successful programs.

Status: Passed the Senate

Prohibiting deceptive trade practices regarding counterfeit airbags

- This new law closes two loopholes in Rhode Island General Law that allowed for the manufacture and installation of counterfeit airbags.
- This law updates the definition of "airbag" to ensure compliance with industry safety standards and imposes criminal liability on those who manufacture or import false airbags.
- Rhode Island joins 15 other states that have enacted legislation to prohibit this deceptive trade practice.

Status: Signed Into Law

Increasing the timeframe for submitting documents

- This law provides limited-liability companies (LLCs) with the same flexibility provided to business corporations for filing documents with the Secretary of State.
- The alternate timeframe for when documents must be filed increases from 30 to 90 days.

Status: Signed Into Law

Simplifying registration for professional land surveyors

- This law streamlines the process of becoming a registered professional land surveyor, an effort to react to the high demand for surveyors at a time when state regulations are viewed as barriers.
- Certain professional experience will now count toward meeting qualifications.
- Changes to the law bring Rhode Island in line with its neighboring states.

Status: Signed Into Law

Informing property owners about zoning amendments

- This law requires written notice to all real property owners when a proposed zoning ordinance amendment would cause a conforming lot to become nonconforming by lot area and/or frontage.
- This notice will serve as a supplemental notice for property owners who may miss the notice published solely in the newspaper.

Status: Signed Into Law

Disclosure of marijuana cultivation in real estate transactions

- This legislation would include “marijuana cultivation” on the disclosure form for real estate transactions.
- Open and obvious effects, as well as latent issues, can arise when a location is used to grow marijuana, such as mold spores leaching onto ventilation systems.
- Oftentimes, home buyers will have no notice or knowledge that the premise has been used for cultivation and must then bear the cost of remedial measures.

Status: Vetoed by the Governor

Eliminating a mandate for cities and towns

- Cities and towns were relieved of the mandate that they issue hunting and fishing licenses. While this law permits them to continue issuing licenses, they may opt out of the licensing chore if they prefer.
- Although municipalities have needed to pay for equipment in order to issue licenses, many have issued very few licenses, or none, in recent years because people can order them online and in hunting and fishing shops throughout the state.

Status: Became Law Without Governor’s Signature

Requiring tax returns of U.S. presidential candidates to qualify for R.I. ballots

- This proposed legislation would require any candidate for president of the United States to submit his or her tax returns for the previous 5 years with the state Board of Elections.
- In order to qualify for the Presidential Preference primary ballot, prospective candidates would submit their returns at least 63 days before the election.
- In order to qualify for the General Election ballot, prospective candidates for president and vice president would need to submit their returns at least 63 days before the election.

Status: Passed the Senate

Narrowing the operation of speed cameras in school zones

- This new law narrows the regulation of automated speed enforcement systems in school zones to limit their use to days and times when schools are in session.
- Camera systems in local communities will only be operational on school days between the hours of 7 a.m. and 6 p.m., instead of 24 hours a day throughout the course of the year.
- New systems must give out a warning for a period of 30 days following their installation. Fines for violations after the 30-day warning period were reduced from \$95 to \$50.

Status: Became Law Without Governor's Signature

Separating credit history from car insurance rates

- This legislation would prevent car insurance agencies from factoring in a person's credit score when determining their car insurance rate.
- Under current Rhode Island law, car insurance companies may use an individual's credit history to set insurance prices.

Status: Passed the Senate

Alerting the public about bus route changes

- Before the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority permanently alters or eliminates any bus route, it must hold a public hearing in neighborhoods along the affected routes.
- The authority will prepare a neighborhood impact statement first and then hold a hearing at least 30 days prior to changing a bus route.

Status: Signed Into Law



In the News

Good Government and Consumer Protection

Senate Bill No. 3002

Fear of Census common for immigrants in R.I.

Test count reveals they are suspicious in Trump era of anti-immigrant policies

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Omar Bah had sequestered himself on the back porch of a relative's home, all the better to work on his doctoral dissertation, when he heard three hard knocks on the door.

Source The Providence Journal

Date July 5, 2018

Author Kevin G. Andrade

“They knocked on the door, very hard, like a police knock,” said Bah, an immigrant from The Gambia and executive director of Providence's Refugee Dream Center.

The 38-year-old strained to hear as an elderly relative answered the door. The visitors identified themselves as enumerators working on the U.S. Census Bureau's 2018 End-to-End Test, when the test census examines how well the count's technologies and activities function as a whole. She refused several times to participate.

Finally, Bah recalled, they left. She shut the home's doors and curtains.

Bah said she was worried that the enumerators were involved with the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE).

Continue Reading on: <http://www.providencejournal.com/news/20180705/fear-of-census-common-for-immigrants-in-ri>



Press Releases

Good Government and Consumer Protection

Senate Bill No. 2008 Substitute A

Maintaining net neutrality with state contracts

Date June 13, 2018

Sen. DiPalma's legislation regarding net neutrality rules and state contracts passes Senate Commerce Committee

Link [Read online](#)

STATE HOUSE – Sen. Louis P. DiPalma's legislation (2018-S 2008A) that would prohibit the state from entering into contracts with any internet service provider (ISP) who engages in business practices that were prohibited by recently repealed net neutrality rules was passed by the Senate Committee on Commerce last night.

The legislation would require ISPs that wish to compete for state contracts not to block lawful content or applications, slow down access to lawful internet content, offer paid prioritization of content or applications or unreasonably interfere with users' ability to access lawful content or applications.

“It was quite unfortunate that the FCC decided to repeal the net neutrality rules. These rules protected the consumer and web site owners from being discriminated against by the large internet service providers in favor of large corporations who could afford to pay for a different level of internet service, effectively choking small business owners and consumers with added costs. Although the Rhode Island General Assembly does not have the power to mandate how internet providers conduct their business, we can say that any provider who engages in these unscrupulous business practices will not be considered for any state contract in Rhode Island,” said Senator DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Little Compton, Newport, Tiverton).

Rep. Brian Patrick Kennedy, Speaker Pro Tempore of the House of Representatives, has introduced the companion legislation (2018-H 7076) in the House of Representatives.

“When net neutrality rules were enacted, it was ensured that everyone would have access to an open and equal internet. With the repeal of these rules, such open and fair access to the internet is in jeopardy. As a state we must ensure that these practices will not affect state and municipal contracts in order to protect Rhode Island consumers and local small businesses. It is my hope that this legislation will send a clear message to internet service providers that Rhode Island will not tolerate any business practices that abuse our residents and businesses,” said Representative Kennedy (D-Dist. 38, Hopkinton, Westerly).

[Continue Reading](#)



Press Releases

Good Government and Consumer Protection

Senate Bill No. 2502 Substitute B

Eliminating onerous requirements for food trucks

Date June 23, 2018

Bill streamlining food truck registration passes

Link [Read online](#)

STATE HOUSE – Lawmakers today passed and sent to the governor legislation to lighten the regulatory burden on operators of food trucks.

The State Mobile Food Establishment Registration Act (2018-S 2502B, 2018-H 7790A) introduced by Sen. Dawn Euer and House Speaker Pro Tempore Brian Patrick Kennedy on behalf of the Department of Administration, would standardize the business registration process for trucks or carts that sell food, ice cream or lemonade by creating a state mobile food establishment registration, and would explicitly exempt such establishments from laws regulating hawkers and peddlers. Currently, food truck and cart operators must navigate different regulatory structures in each municipality in which they operate. The bill would maintain the ability of municipalities to regulate location and hours of operation.

“As popular as food trucks are, Rhode Island’s complicated regulatory hurdles for them can hinder their development. Streamlining those regulations will encourage more people to launch new and exciting businesses that support families, provide jobs and strengthen Rhode Island’s rich culinary atmosphere,” said Senator Euer (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown). “All of our communities are enriched when mom-and-pop businesses are able to flourish. Eliminating overregulation is a way we can support these small businesses, enhancing the character of our communities while allowing hardworking entrepreneurs to succeed.”

Said Representative Kennedy (D-Dist. 38, Hopkinton, Westerly), “Food truck owners go into business because they have a dream of making food people enjoy, not because they are really good at navigating complicated, confusing regulations. Everyone wins when we eliminate the red tape and help small business owners get closer to making their dreams come true.”



Press Releases

Good Government and Consumer Protection

Senate Bill No. 2562

Ensuring free credit freezes for consumers

Date June 12, 2018

General Assembly OKs bill banning fees for credit freezes

Link [Read online](#)

STATE HOUSE – With final votes in both chambers today, the General Assembly approved legislation sponsored by Sen. Cynthia A. Coyne and Rep. Mia A. Ackerman to prohibit consumer reporting agencies from charging consumers a fee for a credit freeze.

The legislation (2018-S 2562, 2018-H 7604), which will now be sent to the governor, eliminates a provision of existing law that allows reporting agencies to charge up to \$10 to consumers who ask for a credit freeze, also known as a security freeze, that prohibits a reporting agency from giving their personal credit information to any third-party creditor. Current law prohibits the fee only when the consumer has been a victim of identity fraud or is over 65.

The legislation, which the sponsors introduced on behalf of Attorney General Peter F. Kilmartin, stems from the Equifax security breach last year during which the credit info of 143 million Americans was exposed. Initially, Equifax was charging consumers who asked for a credit freeze to protect themselves from its own security breach, although it stopped after public outcry and pressure from numerous attorneys general.

“If somebody suspects they have been victimized by identity theft, a consumer report security freeze can help the person track whether an identity thief is using information to set up bogus accounts,” said Representative Ackerman (D-Dist. 45, Cumberland, Lincoln). “There’s no need to punish consumers who are choosing a path of credit security and financial responsibility. I think this is good pro-consumer legislation.”

Said Senator Coyne (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence), “Your credit information belongs to you, not the credit reporting agencies. When you ask them to stop giving it out to other parties because of a security concern like identity theft or a data breach, you shouldn’t have to pay them. They profit from charging those parties for that information, but that doesn’t mean you owe them anything if you tell them to stop because their providing it would put you at risk for fraud. Consumers should have the right to take control of their credit information, without a fee, when they are concerned about security.”

[Continue Reading](#)



Press Releases

Good Government and Consumer Protection

Senate Bill No. 2763 Substitute A

Simplifying the commercial driver's license application process

Date June 5, 2018

Link [Read online](#)

Governor signs legislation streamlining the process to acquire a commercial driver's license

STATE HOUSE — Gov. Gina Raimondo has signed legislation introduced by Rep. Robert D. Phillips (D-Dist. 51, Woonsocket, Cumberland) and Sen. Roger A. Picard (D-Dist. 20, Woonsocket, Cumberland) that will streamline the process to acquire a commercial driver's license.

The law (2018-H 7251A, 2018-S 2763A) will permit the use of an electronic means of transmission of the medical certificate required for the issuance of a commercial driver's license by the Division of Motor Vehicles.

Under the new law, the medical certification required prior to the issuance of a commercial driver's license will be electronically transmitted to the DMV. The process will be accessible through the department's website by way of a menu item labeled "commercial driver's license (CDL) medical certificate."



Press Releases

Good Government and Consumer Protection

Senate Bill No. 3002

Ensuring Census 2020 counts every Rhode Islander

Date July 3, 2018

Link [Read online](#)

Senate passes resolution sponsored by Sen. Cano that requests Governor to create a Census participation committee

STATE HOUSE – The Rhode Island Senate passed a resolution (2018-S 3002) sponsored by Sen. Sandra Cano (D-Dist. 8, Pawtucket) that respectfully requests that the governor create a “Rhode Island Complete Count Committee” to develop, recommend, and assist in the administration of a census outreach strategy to encourage full participation in the 2020 Census.

“An accurate census count is crucial to our state because if our census count is too low in 2020, we may lose a congressional seat and our state would be deprived of much needed federal dollars. I know of many people who are scared to participate due to the rhetoric coming out of Washington but it truly is imperative that everyone responds to the 2020 Census. This is why such a committee is needed because too much is at stake for our state,” said Senator Cano.

The committee would develop, recommend, and assist in the administration of a census outreach strategy to encourage full participation in the 2020 federal decennial census of population. The census outreach strategy would include, but not be limited to, state agency initiatives to encourage participation in the 2020 Census, the establishment and support of school-based outreach programs, partnerships with nonprofit community-based organizations, and a multi-lingual, multi-media campaign designed to ensure an accurate and complete count of Rhode Island’s population.

The 31 member committee would include members of government, community organizations, and various other stake holders in Rhode Island.

Rhode Island Senate

expands

Health and Human Services



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Caring for Rhode Islanders

State Budget, Article 1 as amended, Fiscal Year 2019



1 The \$9.6-billion Fiscal Year 2019 budget achieved several top priorities that guided the Senate as its members negotiated with the House of Representatives and with Governor Gina Raimondo.

2 [Article 1](#) of the state budget outlines appropriations to each agency. The amended and approved versions of [Article 13](#) and [Article 15](#) provide additional details about the state's expenditures for Medicaid, voluntary extension of care, and assistance to people with disabilities.

3 The budget also reflects a settlement reached in June of 2018 over reimbursement rates to nursing homes. By Oct. 1, 2018, the nursing homes will receive a total of 2.5% above the rates that were in place when the settlement was reached. That will equal about \$9 million in additional funding, half of which will come from the state's general fund and the other half from a federal match.

4 Legislators also advocated for the voluntary extension of care program, which provides the option for foster children to remain in state custody until age 21, rather than age 18.

“This budget includes many Senate priorities, including increased education aid, investment in school buildings, and funding for the care of individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities and the Department of Children, Youth and Families.”

Senator Dominick J. Ruggerio, President of the Senate



Due to improved revenue projections in the spring, legislators **restored \$170.7 million** in proposed cuts that would have impacted some of Rhode Island's most vulnerable residents, including:



- **\$18 million** to programs that serve individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities
- **\$8.7 million** to child welfare services
- **\$15.7 million** to Medicaid payments to hospitals for uncompensated care provided to low-income patients
- **\$9.9 million** in newly proposed co-pays for Medicaid enrollees were reversed

STATUS

Signed Into Law



Protecting Health Insurance Consumers

Senate Bill No. 2934 Substitute A

Keeping the health insurance market stable



- 1 The Market Stability and Reinsurance Act authorizes HealthSource RI to create the RI Reinsurance Program to help stabilize the individual health insurance market.
- 2 The goal of the program is to provide reinsurance to commercial insurers to lessen the impact of high-risk patients on health insurance rates and premiums.
- 3 HealthSource RI is authorized to establish reinsurance payment parameters and to apply for a state innovation waiver to run the program.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



“In the face of uncertainty at the federal level, we have to enact protections for health insurance like these at the state level. We must defend affordability and provide critical quality controls to ensure that the policies available to Rhode Islanders are truly within their reach and provide genuine value.”

Senator Joshua Miller, Chairperson of the Senate Committee on Health & Human Services

Senate Bill No. 2785
Substitute A as amended

Protecting Essential Health Benefits

- 1 This bill would codify into state law the federal definition of Essential Health Benefits and preventive services.
- 2 Health insurers would be required to cover those 10 benefits without any cost-sharing for patients.
- 3 Contingent upon a cost and impact assessment by the Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner, the bill would authorize the state to apply for a federal waiver to allow sole proprietors to buy insurance on the small group market.



STATUS

Passed the Senate



Improving Women's Health

Senate Bill No. 2531 Substitute A as amended

Allowing pregnant minors to consent to care

- 1 A parental consent requirement is often a barrier for pregnant minor patients to receive timely and appropriate care.
- 2 This law allows pregnant minors to give consent for emergency, medical, or surgical care, which includes services relating to prenatal, delivery, and post-delivery care.
- 3 32 states and the District of Columbia already have laws that allow minors to consent to prenatal care.

Signed Into Law



Senate Bill No. 2400 Substitute A

Increasing access to prenatal care

- 1 This bill sought to ensure that pregnant women have early access to prenatal care.
- 2 Pregnant women with an income above the current Medicaid income limit and up to 400% of the Federal Poverty Level would be allowed to purchase a Medicaid managed care plan.
- 3 The goals of the program include timely enrollment, ease of payment, and prompt transfer to another available insurance plan once the baby is born.

Passed the Senate



“Prenatal care is critical to the health of babies and mothers alike. There should be no barriers standing between a young woman who is pregnant and the health care that she needs. With this law, we affirm that anyone who is pregnant has the right to seek for herself the care that she needs to have a healthy pregnancy.”

Senator Gayle L. Goldin

Senate Bill No. 2529 Substitute A

Making contraceptives more accessible

- 1 This law requires health insurers that cover prescriptions to cover the dispensing of covered prescription contraceptives for up to 365 days at a time.
- 2 The Executive Office of Health and Human Services will apply for federal approval to allow the dispensing of up to 365 days of prescription contraceptives as a single prescription for Medicaid recipients.

Signed Into Law



Senate Bill No. 2224

Easing the financial burden of breast cancer

- 1 Rhode Island is home to more than 400,000 breast cancer survivors, and nearly 800 individuals here are diagnosed each year with breast cancer.
- 2 This law's objective is to alleviate some of the financial burden for individuals diagnosed with breast cancer.
- 3 The new law eliminates language from existing law that says health coverage for mastectomies may be subject to annual deductibles and coinsurance provisions.

Signed Into Law



Appendix: Health and Human Services

Senate Bill No. 2077 Substitute A as amended

Protecting against unanticipated out-of-network medical bills

- This bill would make “surprise billing” an extremely rare event, and it sought to protect patients, including the uninsured, from unexpected medical bills.
- Surprise medical billing happens when a patient goes to a hospital or other healthcare facility that a health insurer considers “in-network,” only to find out later that a particular provider involved with the patient’s care wasn’t covered by the same insurance and bills the patient for the difference.
- The bill outlined an out-of-network billing protocol and an arbitrated dispute resolution process.

Status: Passed the Senate

Senate Bill No. 2083

Providing housing and healthcare for the homeless

- This bill would authorize the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to apply for any necessary federal waivers, waiver amendments, and state plan amendments that would ensure that individuals who are homeless have access to supportive housing services and to mobile services to treat mental and behavioral health concerns.
- Ideally, this legislation would reduce emergency department usage, integrate mental and behavioral healthcare into more primary care settings, and promote team-based models of care.

Status: Passed the Senate

Senate Bill No. 2129

Determining a more comprehensive approach for treating homelessness

- This bill defines chronically homeless using the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development definition, which includes long-term homelessness with co-occurring substance use disorder, serious mental illness, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or cognitive impairment.
- This bill would create the Rhode Island Pathways Project, which would require 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.
- The state would use current waivers to provide Medicaid coverage for treatment of homelessness, and Rhode Island would also apply for any additional waivers to ensure that individuals have access to housing and supportive housing services.

Status: Passed the Senate

Banning unhealthy food advertising in schools

- This law prohibits advertisements in schools for unhealthy foods and beverages that do not meet the minimum nutrition requirements of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s “Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010.”

Status: Signed Into Law

Prohibiting gender discrimination

- This bill would prohibit insurance companies in the individual or group market from varying the premium rates charged for a health coverage plan based on gender.
- The Affordable Care Act prohibits gender rating in individual and small group markets, and this bill would expand these protections to large group markets.
- Other states, including Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, New York, and New Jersey, have banned gender rating.

Status: Passed the Senate

Seeking to reduce staff turnover in nursing facilities

- This bill would require managed care organizations to work with the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to develop incentives for nursing facilities that demonstrate lower turnover of employees who work directly with patients.

Status: Passed the Senate

Measuring the reform of long-term services and supports

- This law aims to measure progress toward the state’s goals in improving long-term services and supports for people with chronic illnesses or disabilities.
- The Executive Office of Health and Human Services will develop a public online “scorecard” that tracks several data points, including the number of Medicaid-eligible people who receive care in nursing facilities and the number of people who have transitioned from nursing homes into Medicaid-supported care at home, in assisted-living facilities, or in programs that offer adult day services.

Status: Signed Into Law

Finding new ways to help family caregivers

- The “Family Caregivers Support Act” would require the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to develop annual reports to track data on caregiver assessments and to identify met and unmet needs.
- The department would be authorized to seek a federal waiver to provide family caregiver support, education, and training.

Status: Passed the Senate

Protecting patients

- Step therapy is a type of prior authorization that requires patients to try less expensive drugs before they can step to a more expensive drug.
- This bill would create an expedited step therapy exception protocol for health insurers, so that patients and doctors have access to a clear and convenient process to request a step therapy exception.

Status: Passed the Senate

Protecting consumers

- A new federal rule will allow the sale of short-term, limited-duration health plans.
- Short-term plans have significant “fine print” limitations, including the types of services covered, often with a dollar maximum for each.
- This bill would give the Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner the authority to regulate the short-term plans and to ensure that they have the same consumer protection standards as other plans in the market.

Status: Passed the Senate



Press Releases

Health and Human Services

State Budget, Article 1 as amended, Fiscal Year 2019

Investing in Rhode Islanders' healthcare

Date June 22, 2018

2019 budget bill becomes law

Link [Read online](#)

STATE HOUSE – Following passage by the General Assembly this week, the 2019 state budget bill became law with the governor's signature today.

The \$9.572-billion budget (2018-H 7200Aaa), restores proposed cuts to services for the state's most vulnerable populations and continues the phase-out of the car tax without raising broad-based taxes.

"This is a budget of which we can all be proud. We worked very hard to live within our means and avoid increasing the burdens on taxpayers, while investing in jobs and education, and helping people on Medicaid, seniors and the developmentally disabled. It's a realistic, responsible budget, and it maintains our commitment to phasing out the automobile excise tax, which I know is important to our state's taxpayers," said House Speaker Nicholas A. Mattiello (D-Dist. 15, Cranston).

President of the Senate Dominick J. Ruggerio (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence) said, "This budget includes many Senate priorities, including increased education aid, investment in school buildings, and funding for the care of individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities and DCYF. It maintains the progress we have made in lowering taxes to improve our business climate while also investing in economic development, and it provides Rhode Island with the highest percentage of revenue in the nation for sports wagering. This was a collaborative effort among the Senate, House and Governor Raimondo, and I am grateful for their partnership in development of this responsible, compassionate budget."

Flanked by legislative leaders Gov. Gina M. Raimondo signed the budget in a State House ceremony at noon today. The bill passed the Senate Wednesday, after clearing the House June 15.

"The budget process is a long, careful and deliberate process where often, tough decisions must be made in the best interest of all Rhode Islanders. After many months of hearings and negotiation, I am proud of this budget and I am confident that it will serve Rhode Island well into the future," said House Finance Committee Chairman Marvin L. Abney (D-Dist. 73, Newport, Middletown),

Said Senate Finance Committee Chairman William J. Conley Jr. (D-Dist. 18, East Providence, Pawtucket), "This budget accomplishes a great deal for Rhode Islanders by using our resources carefully. We've been able to restore funding to help people with disabilities and the Department of Children, Youth and Families..."

[Continue Reading](#)



Press Releases

Health and Human Services

Senate Bill No. 2531 Substitute A as amended

Allowing pregnant minors to consent to care

Date July 5, 2018

Governor signs bill to permit medical consent to minors for prenatal, delivery and postnatal care

Link [Read online](#)

STATE HOUSE — Gov. Gina Raimondo has signed legislation introduced by Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (D-Dist. 19, Warwick, Cranston) and Sen. Gayle L. Goldin (D-Dist. 3, Providence) that allows minors to consent to medical care involving pregnancy.

The law (2018-H 7193, 2018-S 2531Aaa) provides that any person, including, but not limited to, a minor who is pregnant, may give effective consent for medical, dental, health and hospital services relating to prenatal, delivery, and post-delivery care.

Dr. Emily White, a Rhode Island obstetrician, gave committee testimony, saying, “Teenage pregnancy is never an ideal situation, but it does happen. And when it does, we want to make sure these young women receive the best medical care. Because of the current law, there can be many barriers to these young women receiving timely and appropriate care.”

Doctor White proceeded to give examples, such as pregnant teens in labor who cannot be given appropriate anesthetic because they have to wait sometimes hours for their parents to be reached to give consent.

After peaking in 1991, the U.S. teen birth rate reached a historic low in 2015, with decreases among all racial and ethnic backgrounds. Rhode Island’s teen birth rate mirrors national trends, peaking in 1993 and reaching an historic low in 2015, according to the Kids Count Factbook. That year in Rhode Island, 539 babies were born to mothers under age 20, accounting for 5 percent of all babies born — the lowest rate ever recorded.

With the passage of this legislation, Rhode Island joins 37 other states that already allow the consent of a minor in prenatal and delivery care.



Press Releases

Health and Human Services

Senate Bill No. 2785 Substitute A as amended

Protecting Essential Health Benefits

Date June 14, 2018

Senate OKs bill to increase health options for sole proprietors, define essential services in health insurance

Link [Read online](#)

STATE HOUSE – The Senate has approved legislation sponsored by Senate Health and Human Services Committee Chairman Joshua Miller to authorize the state to seek a federal waiver under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) to allow sole proprietors and the self-employed to purchase their health insurance in the small group market instead of the individual market, as they were allowed until 2016. The bill would also enact a list of 10 essential health benefits that all health insurance policies would be required to provide, and mandate that preventive services be provided without patient cost-sharing.

The bill (2018-S 2785Aaa), which now goes to the House, is aimed at expanding options and providing savings for small business owners in Rhode Island.

It authorizes the Department of Administration to pursue a State Innovation Waiver under Section 1332 of the Affordable Care Act for a Small Business Health Options Program (SHOP).

“Health insurance is one of the biggest expenses for small businesses, a great many of which are sole proprietors. Before 2016, sole proprietors were able to buy their insurance through the small-group market. Getting the waiver restores this valuable option, and makes it easier should such a business grow and need to add employees to its insurance plan,” said Senator Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence).

The bill also enacts a list of 10 essential health services that all insurance policies sold in Rhode Island must cover. That list includes:

- Ambulatory patient services
- Emergency services
- Hospitalization
- Maternity and newborn care
- Mental health and substance use disorder services, including behavioral health treatment
- Prescription drugs
- Rehabilitative and habilitative services and devices
- Laboratory services
- Preventive services, wellness services and chronic disease management, and
- Pediatric services, including oral and vision care.

[Continue Reading](#)



Press Releases

Health and Human Services

Senate Bill No. 2934 Substitute A

Keeping the health insurance market stable

Date July 19, 2018

New law will help protect against insurance premium hikes

Link [Read online](#)

STATE HOUSE – Legislation passed by the General Assembly to help keep health insurance premiums down has been signed into law.

The legislation (2018-S 2934A, 2018-H 8351), called the Rhode Island Market Stability and Reinsurance Act and sponsored by Senate Health and Human Services Committee Chairman Joshua Miller and Rep. John G. Edwards, is meant to help stabilize health insurance rates and premiums in the individual market and to provide greater financial certainty to consumers. Reinsurance helps reduce the size of premium increases by paying for some of the most expensive claims for some consumers in the individual market.

“This law will help address the high cost of health insurance for consumers and help ensure that those with health issues will be able to get coverage, particularly in light of efforts in Washington to undermine the Affordable Care Act. Every way we can lower costs overall and costs to individual patients is an improvement that makes the costs of maintaining good health more achievable to Rhode Islanders,” said Senator Miller (D-Dist. 28, Cranston, Providence).

The new law authorizes HealthSource RI, Rhode Island’s health insurance exchange, to establish reinsurance to insurance carriers that offer health insurance coverage on the individual market, to mitigate the impact of high-risk individuals on the health insurance rates that consumers pay. The program would depend on the approval of a state innovation waiver from the federal government. This bill did not commit any state funding, but allows HealthSource RI to begin the data analysis, program design and the federal waiver application process. Federal Affordable Care Act savings (realized by lower premiums) and matching funding from other sources are to be identified and proposed separately through legislation next year.

The new law, which passed the General Assembly June 23 and was signed by Gov. Gina M. Raimondo July 3, was recommended by a workgroup convened this spring by the Office of the Health Insurance Commissioner (OHIC) and HealthSource RI to study how to mitigate potential impact of federal changes on health coverage costs, consumer choice and access.

[Continue Reading](#)

Rhode Island Senate

advances

Housing and Development

 @risenate



 @RISenate

Revitalizing Downtown Pawtucket

Senate Bill No. 2001

Senate Bill No. 2002

- 1 The Pawtucket Red Sox are a Triple-A affiliate of the Boston Red Sox and have played at McCoy Stadium in Pawtucket since 1970.
- 2 Since new owners bought the team in 2015, they've been working to develop plans to build a new stadium, first in Providence and then in Pawtucket after efforts in the capital city failed.
- 3 Retaining the team has become a top priority in a community that suffered during the Great Recession and hopes to spur new growth and development along the river in the heart of its city center.
- 4 In the fall of 2017, Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio asked the Senate Finance Committee to deliberate publicly and to evaluate proposed legislation to help finance a new stadium.
- 5 Led by Chairperson William J. Conley Jr., the committee held a series of public hearings over six weeks and delved into the details of the new proposal for a ballpark intended to help revitalize downtown Pawtucket.
- 6 In January, the Senate approved its proposal for a public-private financing structure so the city, state, and team would each contribute to the costs of building a new stadium near Slater Mill.

STATUS

Passed the Senate



Hearing locations:

- Providence
- Pawtucket
- Kingston
- East Greenwich
- Bristol
- Smithfield

7 Senate Committee on Finance public hearings were held in September and October of 2017

28 total hearing hours

324 people submitted testimony

 233 in support

 70 in opposition

 21 neutral



Source: DAIQ Architects

Bill No. 7290
Substitute A

Legislators authorized public financing for a new baseball stadium

- 1 The “Ballpark at Slater Mill” law authorizes \$83 million in revenue debt financing for overall project costs associated with building a new Pawtucket Red Sox stadium and specific ancillary development.

- 2 The Pawtucket Redevelopment Agency would sell bonds to raise the cash. The PawSox would be responsible for paying \$45 million—paying off \$33 million worth of bonds and also investing \$12 million in direct equity upfront.

- 3 The State of Rhode Island and the City of Pawtucket are only obligated to contribute any incremental tax revenue generated within specified areas around the ballpark to pay off the rest of the bonds.

- 4 The debt is not backstopped by the state, in order to eliminate risk to taxpayers. Therefore, if the revenue generated within the tax-increment financing district is not enough to pay back the bondholders, those investors would not have recourse against the state.

- 5 The new law also amends the authority of redevelopment agencies regarding eminent domain and taxation in order to facilitate the Pawtucket Redevelopment Agency’s central role in this ballpark project.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



Helping Rhode Islanders Stay in Their Homes

Senate Bill No. 2270 Substitute A



Avoiding mortgage foreclosures

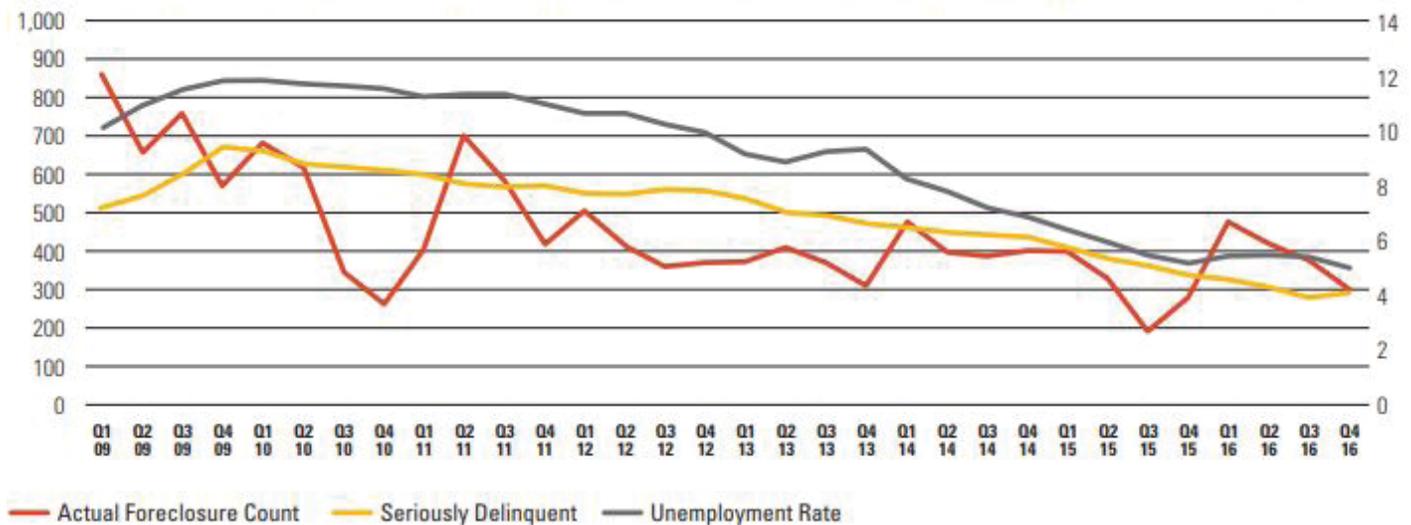
- 1 This law extends the Mortgage Foreclosure Mediation Act, which was set to expire in 2018, for another 5 years.
- 2 The act requires the mortgage lender to participate in a mediation conference prior to initiating a foreclosure.
- 3 Mediation conferences help homeowners to stay in their homes by giving them an opportunity to renegotiate the terms of the mortgage in order to avoid foreclosure.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



RI QUARTERLY FORECLOSURES, MORTGAGE DELINQUENCIES, UNEMPLOYMENT: Q1 2009 - Q4 2016



Source: HousingWorksRI

Investing \$500,000 for Livable Home Modification Grants

State Budget, Article 1 as amended, Fiscal Year 2019

- 1 Home modification projects can allow people to stay safely in their homes and communities longer, and they can help decrease nursing home stays.
- 2 The state budget appropriated \$500,000 for the Livable Home Modification Grant Program, which allocates grant funding to individuals to help pay for improvements that include bathroom modifications, wheelchair ramps, stability rails, and more.
- 3 Grants of up to \$5,000 allow eligible homeowners and renters to retrofit residences to meet nationally recognized accessibility standards.
- 4 By summer of 2018, the program had approved 40 modification projects: 13 had been completed, and 27 were under way.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



“The elderly and disabled population in our state have specific needs within their homes that can, unfortunately, be extremely expensive for themselves and their caregivers. This program will help alleviate the costs to keep our aging and disabled populations in their homes and communities while also saving the state’s taxpayers millions of dollars in nursing home Medicaid costs.”

Senator Walter S. Felag Jr., Chairperson of the Senate Committee on Special Legislation and Veterans Affairs

Appendix: Housing and Development

Senate Bill No. 2068

Stimulating economic revitalization in distressed communities

- This bill would create “micro-zones” in exceptionally distressed areas and would provide significant tax and permitting incentives to encourage redevelopment of existing properties in need of rehabilitation. Vacant buildings were the primary target for the micro-zone designation.
- A municipality would be allowed to designate one or more areas as a micro-zone, allowing building owners within those zones to be eligible for 10-year property tax-stabilization agreements with the community.
- Developers seeking to rehabilitate properties would receive fee-free, expedited building permits and tax credits to reimburse them for the state sales tax paid on all materials, furnishings, and fixtures purchased for the building.

Status: Passed the Senate

Senate Bill No. 2239 Substitute A

Creating a Municipal Infrastructure Grant Program

- The Municipal Infrastructure Grant Program was created within the Department of Administration to distribute public infrastructure grants for improving public spaces and resources.
- However, the program is not funded with state funds or appropriations; rather, it is subject to grant funding.

Status: Signed Into Law

Senate Bill No. 2301

Prohibiting housing discrimination based on income source

- This legislation would prohibit landlords from discriminating against individuals who have a lawful source of income.
- A lawful source of income would be defined as income or any form of government assistance derived from a federal, state, or local government, including Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, and forms of housing assistance.
- This bill sought to ensure that landlords would not deny housing to an individual for the sole reason that a person is receiving governmental assistance.

Status: Passed the Senate

Setting requirements for properties in flood hazard areas

- This law addresses development in special flood hazard areas by requiring that the height of a building will be measured from base flood elevation.
- For properties that are higher than official Federal Emergency Management Agency specifications, the owner or building applicant for a new structure may use design elevation maps from the Coastal Resources Management Council to establish a base flood elevation.

Status: Signed Into Law

Allowing residential sprinkler systems instead of cisterns

- This law applies to cities and towns that require the installation of common cisterns or other water reservoirs for fire-protection purposes in residential subdivisions.
- Those communities may now approve ordinances that provide residential developers an option of installing code-compliant, residential sprinkler systems in place of cisterns.

Status: Signed Into Law



In the News

Housing and Development

Senate Bill No. 2270 Substitute A

Kilmartin, RI Housing, Solomon urge General Assembly to renew Foreclosure Mediation Act

Attorney General Peter F. Kilmartin, Senator Harold Metts, Representative Mary Messier, RI Housing officials and municipal leaders including Acting Mayor Joseph Solomon met at the Community Room at 500 Broad Street in Providence Monday to urge the General Assembly to preserve protections for Rhode Island homeowners facing foreclosure.

Source Warwick Post

Date May 22, 2018

Author Rob Borkowski

The State's Foreclosure Mediation Act will sunset on July 1, 2018 if no action is taken. This Act ensures that homeowners struggling with their mortgage payment can have the opportunity to meet with their lender and an independent mediator to review their options with the goal of remaining in the home and not having the property foreclosed on.

Senator Metts and Representative Messier have introduced legislation (S2270/H7385) to lift the sunset, but time is running out to act on the legislation. The Senate is scheduled to vote on Wednesday on amended legislation. The House version has been held for further study.

Continue Reading on: <https://warwickpost.com/kilmartin-ri-housing-solomon-urge-general-assembly-renew-foreclosure-mediation-act/>

R.I. Senate OKs extending foreclosure protections for 5 years

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — With a vote of 31 to 0, the state Senate passed a bill Wednesday that would extend for another five years a law requiring banks to mediate with homeowners before starting a foreclosure.

Source The Providence Journal

Date May 23, 2018

Author Mark Reynolds

The state's Foreclosure Mediation Act, passed in 2013, is set to expire July 1.

The law requires lenders to give homeowners the option of meeting with their lender and an independent mediator from Rhode Island Housing to attempt to work out a solution and avoid foreclosure.

Continue Reading on: <http://www.providencejournal.com/news/20180523/ri-senate-oks-extending-foreclosure-protections-for-5-years>



Press Releases

Housing and Development

Senate Bill No. 2001 & Senate Bill No. 2002

Revitalizing Downtown Pawtucket

Date January 16, 2018

Senate passes legislation to authorize public financing of ballpark for Pawtucket Red Sox

Link [Read online](#)

STATE HOUSE — The State Senate has passed legislation introduced by Sen. William J. Conley Jr. (D-Dist. 18, East Providence, Pawtucket) that would provide public support for a new baseball stadium in downtown Pawtucket. The stadium would be the future home of the Pawtucket Red Sox.

After months of deliberation and public input, the Senate Finance Committee recommended passage of legislation (2018-S 2001) that authorizes the state to enter into lease and financing agreements in connection with a ballpark. The Senate also passed a bill (2018-S 2002) that would permit redevelopment agencies to finance the construction of projects for residential, recreational, commercial, industrial, institutional, public or other purposes contemplated by a redevelopment plan.

“This legislation, which was greatly revised from the form it originally took when proposed last year, responds to concerns raised during the committee process,” said Senator Conley. “It strengthens what was already a good deal for the city and the state, and provides a mutually beneficial path forward to keep the PawSox in Pawtucket.”

The \$83 million project will be funded through a combination of borrowing on behalf of all three partners (the PawSox, the city of Pawtucket and the State of Rhode Island) and a team equity contribution. The team would cover the majority of the costs, contributing \$12 million in equity and principal debt of \$33 million. The state and city would provide \$23 million and \$15 million in principal debt respectively. The terms of the borrowing are estimated to be between 4 and 5 percent for 30 years. Annual debt service payments are estimated to be \$2.3 million, \$1.5 million and \$963,000 for the team, state and city respectively.

The legislation passed by the Senate directs \$250,000 of the ballpark naming rights revenue to the city of Pawtucket to assist with its annual debt service payment.

“After our exhaustive look at the proposal, I am convinced that the deal pays for itself,” said Senator Conley. “Our goal was to pass legislation that is fair to all parties, and I truly believe we have come up with the best legislation possible.”

The legislation now heads to the House of Representatives for consideration.



Press Releases

Housing and Development

Senate Bill No. 2270 Substitute A

Avoiding mortgage foreclosures

Date July 3, 2018

Governor signs bill that extends foreclosure mediation law

Link [Read online](#)

STATE HOUSE – The governor has signed into law legislation (2018-S 2270A, 2018-H 7385A) sponsored by Sen. Harold M. Metts and Rep. Mary Duffy Messier to add five years to the life of an expiring law that keeps families in their homes and avoids foreclosure.

The bill, which the sponsors submitted on behalf of Attorney General Peter F. Kilmartin, extends a July 1 sunset provision in a 2013 law that requires mortgage lenders to initiate and participate in mediation efforts with homeowners facing foreclosure in an effort to prevent it. The bill moves the sunset provision to July 1, 2023.

The sponsors said the law provides critical protection for homeowners, requiring their lenders to make a good-faith effort with the help of an independent mediator to try to come to an agreement that helps save their homes from foreclosure.

“Foreclosure devastates families and neighborhoods. Mediation helps people find ways they can save their homes and all that they’ve invested in them. Rhode Island and our communities were hit very hard by the foreclosure crisis, and this act made a real difference in stemming that tide and preserving families’ homes. While I hope to see this provision made permanent, extending it for another five years will help many more Rhode Islanders avoid foreclosure, stabilizing their families and neighborhoods,” said Senator Harold M. Metts (D-Dist. 6, Providence).

According to RIHousing, which administers the program, over 70 percent of homeowners who have taken advantage of the opportunity for mediation are able to reach an agreement that allows them to stay in their home.

“This law has been a lifeline for so many families who were on the brink of losing their homes. Mediation is in the best interest of all parties, because it keeps people in their homes, paying their mortgages at a rate they can afford. The value of this law to Rhode Island, our residents and our communities has been well demonstrated, and it should be extended,” said Representative Duffy Messier (D-Dist. 62, Pawtucket).

[Continue Reading](#)



Press Releases

Housing and Development

State Budget, Article 1 as amended, Fiscal Year 2019

Investing \$500,000 for Livable Home Modification Grants

Date May 29, 2018

Sen. Felag's Rhode Island Livable Home Modification Grant Act passes the Senate

Link [Read online](#)

STATE HOUSE — Sen. Walter S. Felag Jr.'s (D-Dist. 10, Bristol, Tiverton, Warren) legislation, the Rhode Island Livable Home Modification Grant Act, passed the Rhode Island Senate tonight.

The legislation (2018-S 2554Aaa) would allow 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 elderly and disabled population in our state have specific needs within their homes that can unfortunately be extremely expensive for themselves and their caregivers. This program will help alleviate the costs to keep our aging and disabled populations in their homes and communities while also saving the state's taxpayers millions of dollars in nursing home Medicaid costs,” said Senator Felag.

Last year's budget appropriated \$250,000 to fund the grant program, which grew out of legislation proposed by Senator Felag that would have created a tax credit for homes that were retrofitted. For that pilot program, all retrofit projects must be completed prior to the end of the State's fiscal year, June 30, and post-retrofit documentation must be submitted no later than July 10. The proposed legislation would codify the grant program into state law.

The act is aimed at helping Rhode Island's aging population stay safely in their homes longer rather than overburdening the state's nursing homes, which costs taxpayers millions of dollars each year in Medicaid costs. With the state's aging population rising each year, there is a distinct need for housing that is safe and adapted to the needs of the elderly.

One of the keys for an individual with a disability to remain in their community is the ability to get into and out of their own home and navigate safely within that home, with or without assistance. Renovating a residence by removing barriers allows the individual to stay safely and independently within their home, and out of long-term care facilities.

The Livable Home Modification Grant Application and Post-Retrofit Claim form can be found at www.gcd.ri.gov.

Rhode Island Senate

protects

Natural Resources and the Environment

 @risenate



 @RISenate

Enhancing Green Space and Waterways

State Budget, Article 5, Fiscal Year 2019



- 1 The state budget includes authorization to ask Rhode Island voters in November of 2018 to approve the issuance of \$47.3 million in general obligation bonds to help pay for green economy and clean water initiatives.
- 2 If voters approve, the following amounts will be allocated to help pay for initiatives supported by the Rhode Island Senate:

- \$7.9 million:** Clean water and drinking water initiatives that include infrastructure improvements to wastewater treatment facilities and to stormwater systems;
- \$7 million:** Dredging analysis and dredging of rivers in Providence in and around downtown;
- \$5 million:** Matching grants to public and nonprofit entities to restore and improve vulnerable coastal habitats and river and stream floodplains;
- \$5 million:** Matching grants for resiliency improvements to wastewater treatment facilities vulnerable to increased flooding, major storm events, and environmental degradation;
- \$5 million:** Design, repair, and construction of state bikeways, including the East Bay bike path; and



Seeking voter approval for a \$47.3-million bond referendum



\$5 million:

Matching grants to local municipalities to acquire, develop, or rehabilitate local recreational facilities such as sports fields, tennis courts, and playgrounds;

\$4.4 million:

Repair, removal, and other safety projects of state-owned dams;

\$4 million:

Matching grants to public, private, and/or nonprofit entities for brownfield remediation projects intended to remove hazards, attract jobs, and protect the urban environment;

\$2 million:

To protect working farms in the state through the State Farm Access Program and the purchase of development rights by the Agricultural Land Preservation Commission; and

\$2 million:

Matching grants to municipalities, local land trusts, and nonprofit entities to acquire fee-simple interest, development rights, or conservation easements on open space and urban parklands.

STATUS

Awaiting Voter Referendum in November of 2018



Ensuring Continued Growth

Senate Bill No. 2511



Exporting Rhode Island shellfish

- 1 The National Shellfish Sanitation Program assures the safety of shellfish sold through interstate commerce.
- 2 This law brings the state into compliance with the National Shellfish Sanitation Program, an effort intended to assist Rhode Island's commercial fishing industry in exporting shellfish.
- 3 The director of the state's Department of Environmental Management is empowered to promote and improve sanitation of shellfish.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



600+

Commercial shellfishermen landed **\$6.5 million** worth of wild harvest shellfish

and

70

Aquaculture businesses harvested **\$5.5 million** worth of product.

That totals **\$12 million** in shellfish harvested in 2016 in Rhode Island.

Data source: RI Department of Environmental Management



Visit seafoodri.com to learn more

Protecting Separation of Powers

Senate Bill No. 2955 Substitute A



Changing the Coastal Resources Management Council's membership

1

For the seventh year, the Senate passed a bill to amend the composition of the Coastal Resources Management Council so that it complies with a state law that was passed in 2004. This year, the bill has finally become law.

2

The old law defining the CRMC membership has been unconstitutional for years, and this new law finally brings the council into compliance with the Rhode Island constitution.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



Changes to the CRMC



Council reduced from 16 to 10 members.



9 members appointed by the Governor, with advice and consent of the Senate.



Council will no longer include 2 senators, 2 representatives, or 4 members appointed by the legislature.

Appendix: Natural Resources, Energy, and the Environment

2017 Senate Resolution No. 0887 / 2018 Senate Resolution No. 2053 Substitute A

Protecting Rhode Island's water supply

- In a state with 29 major water systems, most of which are not regulated, and 450 small water systems, protecting Rhode Island's water supply and developing infrastructure to do so is vitally important.
- Created by Senate resolution, the newly formed Legislative Commission to Study the Rhode Island Water Resources Board and Water Supply has studied ways to strengthen the state's water supply and to ensure the proper development, protection, conservation, and use of the state's water resources.
- After launching its analysis, this commission recommended that its work should continue. The Senate agreed and passed [Senate Resolution No. 2966](#) to extend the commission through June of 2019.
- Although consumers pay for water, not all collected revenue is spent on ensuring a safe, abundant water supply. For example, 57% of the state surcharge paid by consumers goes into the state's general fund. That's just one of many topics the commission will continue to analyze.

Status: Resolution Was Enacted

2017 Senate Resolution No. 0982 / 2018 Senate Resolution No. 2109

The Legislative Commission to Study Pesticide Control Regulations

- This 11-member Senate commission examined ways to reduce the dangers from pesticides, which lead to human and animal deaths each year in the United States when they're improperly used and also destroy pollinators and food sources.
- The commission made several recommendations:
 - Fund the Department of Environmental Management's pesticide program to the greatest extent possible, including restoring money to the program and replacing staff lost to attrition over the past 5 years;
 - Deposit the licensing and registration fees paid by applicators into a restricted-receipt account for the program and positions, and use the funds to enhance the pesticide applicator training program;
 - Mandate the department's training in the proper use of pesticides so that Rhode Island doesn't face a tragedy like those that other states have experienced because of improper use of pesticides;
 - Educate the public about pesticide dangers, because homeowners actually use more pesticides than commercial pesticide applicators; and
 - Require the state beekeeper position to become a full-time position because protecting pollinators is so vital to the health of our planet.

Status: Resolution Was Enacted

Implementing a purchase of receivables program

- This law allows the Public Utilities Commission to adopt a purchase of receivables program for competitive electric supplies, if it finds that the benefits of this program exceed the costs to customers.
- If adopted, this program would open the retail choice markets and would guarantee a certain percentage of collections for the competitive supplier, even in the event of nonpayment of the electric bill by the customer.

Status: Signed Into Law

Ensuring prompt and adequate service

- This legislation would require public utilities and electric distribution companies to provide prompt and adequate service to ratepayers relating to new service and service upgrades.
- This effort sought to address concerns of new and expanding businesses that have encountered errors in estimated utility costs, which make it difficult to budget properly.

Status: Passed the Senate

Easing governmental burdens on local farmers

- Many Rhode Island farmers plant in fields that are located in different municipalities, which can require them to comply with different rules, regulations, and ordinances governing planting and other use of seeds.
- This law now gives the Department of Environmental Management jurisdiction over all uses of agricultural and vegetable seeds.

Status: Signed Into Law

Verifying energy savings measures

- This law requires the Office of Energy Resources to conduct a study that analyzes the electric and gas distribution companies' state energy efficiency programs.
- This would allow the state to verify the energy savings measures from these efficiency programs.

Status: Signed Into Law

Extending the life of Rhode Island's only landfill

- This law allows the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation to use glass as a cover material at the state landfill in Johnston.
- The only recycled glass plant in the Northeast unexpectedly closed in 2018.
- Without this important legislation, the corporation would have been forced to bury glass in the landfill, thus shortening the length of time the landfill can be used.
- This law allows the state to extend the life of the central landfill by 9,000 tons per year – that's approximately the volume of waste generated in communities such as Cumberland, North Providence, West Warwick, or Woonsocket. Each year the state can prevent burying that much material is another year of disposal capacity the state can preserve.

Status: Signed Into Law



Press Releases

Natural Resources, Energy, and the Environment

Senate Bill No. 2955 Substitute A

Changing the Coastal Resources Management Council's membership

Date July 3, 2018

Link [Read online](#)

Governor signs bill that fixes longstanding conflict in law establishing Coastal Resources Management Council

STATE HOUSE – The governor has signed legislation to restructure the Coastal Resources Management Council to reflect separation of powers.

The legislation (2018-S 2955A, 2018-H 8319A) was sponsored by Sen. V. Susan Sosnowski and Rep. Kenneth A. Marshall.

Rhode Island voters approved a constitutional amendment in 2004 that established that the powers of the three branches of state government must be separate and distinct. That amendment meant that legislators could no longer serve on boards with administrative functions or directly appoint people to them.

Subsequent to the approval of the amendment, legislators approved many laws reconstituting state boards and commissions to remove legislators or members appointed by them. But until now, the Assembly had never passed one to address CRMC, which is charged with the primary responsibility for the continued planning and management of the resources of the state's coastal region. The Assembly simply stopped appointing the two representatives, two senators specified by the law, as well as public members that the law says are to be appointed by the speaker of the House.

The result essentially complied with separation of powers, but left the council with 10 members instead of 16, and a law that requires seven of them for a quorum.

Senator Sosnowski, who served as a Senate member of the CRMC years ago, introduced similar legislation for CRMC for a number of years following adoption of the separation of powers amendment. She called the legislation "long overdue."

"I'm elated that this bill has now passed. While legislators brought a lot to CRMC in terms of accountability and representation of our communities, the voters spoke clearly on separation of powers. CRMC is a hard-working council with vital responsibilities, and it's done very well operating for many years under an outdated, unconstitutional law that doesn't reflect its actual membership. Finally addressing this situation will help CRMC carry out the important work it does balancing coastal preservation and development," said Senator Sosnowski (D-Dist. 37, South Kingstown, New Shoreham), who chairs the Senate Committee on Environment and Agriculture.

[Continue Reading](#)

Rhode Island Senate

strengthens

Public Safety



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Preventing Gun Violence and Mass Shootings

Senate Bill No. 2492 Substitute A



“Red Flag” Law allows seizure of firearms from dangerous individuals

- 1 Rhode Island’s “Red Flag” Law allows police officers to petition the court for a “temporary extreme risk protection order” that enables them to obtain a warrant and seize firearms from an individual if that person poses a significant danger of causing imminent personal injury to themselves or others.
- 2 During the execution of the warrant, the person subject to the order must surrender to the police all firearms in their care and custody and any permit for carrying a concealed weapon.
- 3 After a hearing on the warrant and firearm seizure, the court may extend the temporary extreme risk protection order and prohibit the individual from possessing firearms for a period of one year.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



Data source: The Trace

Senate Bill No. 2292
Substitute A

Banning the possession of “bump stocks”

- 1 The new law bans the possession of “bump stocks” and other attachments that make semi-automatic firearms fire faster and operate at nearly the rate of fully automatic firearms.
- 2 Law enforcement officials determined that a Las Vegas shooting suspect modified the semi-automatic rifles he used with “bump stocks” in order to fire bullets more rapidly into the crowd of concertgoers in October of 2017.
- 3 Individuals who violate this law would be guilty of a felony and would face imprisonment for up to 10 years, a fine of up to \$10,000, or both.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



Effects of Risk-Based Firearm Seizure Laws

Indiana

7.5% ↓

Reduction in firearm suicides in the 10 years following its enactment.

Connecticut

1.6% ↓

Reduction in firearm suicides immediately after its passage.

13.7% ↓

Reduction in firearm suicides in the post-Virginia Tech period, when enforcement increased.

Data source: American Psychiatric Association Publishing, PsychiatryOnline

Protecting Rhode Island's Children

Senate Bill No. 2867 Substitute A



Stiffening penalties for drunk driving with children in vehicles

- 1 This new law increases criminal penalties for individuals who drive under the influence of drugs or alcohol when children under the age of 13 are in the vehicle.
- 2 First offenders face an immediate license suspension, a fine of up to \$1,000, and a possible jail sentence not to exceed one year.
- 3 Repeat offenders face felony charges, fines of up to \$5,000, and sentences up to 5 years in prison.
- 4 When sentencing offenders for this penalty, judges are required to order license suspensions of up to 2 years and to require offenders to attend appropriate substance use disorder education classes and/or treatment.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



“No kid should ever have to be a victim of drunk driving ever again. That’s our ultimate goal, and that pertains to every victim, both young and old.”

Eric Creamer, Executive Director of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Rhode Island Chapter
Channel 12 WPRI-TV report

**Senate Bill No. 2683
as amended**



**Creating children's advocacy centers
in Rhode Island**

- 1 This law provides a process for creating children's advocacy centers throughout Rhode Island, and it increases access to child-focused and community-based organizations that help children who have been abused.
- 2 The child-centered approach of these centers relies on a multi-disciplinary team comprised of law enforcement personnel, caseworkers, employees from the Department of Children, Youth and Families, and experts from other agencies.
- 3 Children's advocacy centers have operated under a memorandum of understanding with the Office of the Attorney General. This new law delineates a statewide accreditation process.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



Agencies in Rhode Island that employ this child-centered approach

Day One
100 Medway St.
Providence, RI

The Kent Center
2756 Post Rd.
Warwick, RI



Child & Family
31 John Clarke Rd.
Middletown, RI

Women & Infants Suite
South County Commons
49 South County Commons Way
South Kingstown, RI

Learn More: <https://www.dayoneri.org/childrens-advocacy-center>

Appendix: Public Safety

Senate Bill No. 2134 Substitute A

Reporting on gun crimes in Rhode Island

- This law requires the Attorney General to submit an annual report to the General Assembly showing incidents of gun crimes from the prior year.
- The report will show the number of offenders by county as well as non-warranted and warranted indictments issued with respect to crimes involving guns.
- The report will also show the number of offenders in gun-related cases who were punished by sentence, fine, or both.

Status: Became Law Without Governor's Signature

Senate Bill No. 2179 Substitute A

Ensuring schools have working carbon monoxide detectors

- This law requires that all schools install and maintain carbon monoxide detectors in response to a student who experienced health issues due to exposure to carbon monoxide while in school.
- This amendment to the state fire code promotes the health and safety of students and staff and aligns with new national fire code standards.

Status: Signed Into Law

Senate Bill No. 2299 Substitute B

Prohibiting minors from using tanning facilities

- This law prohibits anyone under the age of 18 from using tanning facilities.
- Fifteen states, including Massachusetts, have outlawed the use of tanning salons by minors.
- Evidence from multiple studies has shown that indoor tanning is strongly linked to skin cancer. The incidence rate of melanoma in Rhode Island increased 44% from 2015 to 2018.

Status: Signed Into Law

Creating a clear reporting protocol for alleged sexual abuse in schools

- The goal of this law is to create a clear procedure for reporting alleged sexual abuse in public and private schools.
- School employees are required to report alleged sexual abuse to the school principal or designated agent.
- One designated employee of the school will be responsible for filing the reports with the Department of Children, Youth and Families, in order to improve accountability. In recent years, some schools produced multiple reports on the same incident, while others failed to report because employees thought a report had already been filed.

Status: Signed Into Law

Studying the vicious dog hearing process

- This resolution creates a study commission to review the hearing process that determines a dog's status as "vicious." The hearing will be conducted by local animal control officers and law enforcement agencies.
- When a dog is determined to be "vicious," the owner must comply with a series of legal provisions in order to keep the dog, including posting signs on the owner's property notifying people that there is a vicious dog on the premises.
- The study commission includes state senators, representatives from the Rhode Island Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the Rhode Island Police Chiefs Association, and other stakeholders.
- The commission must report its findings by March 1, 2019, and the study panel will expire on July 1, 2019.

Status: Resolution Was Enacted

Criminalizing revenge porn in Rhode Island

- This law criminalizes the dissemination of any indecent image of another person without that individual's permission.
- The practice of publishing such images or threatening to publish them has commonly been referred to as "revenge porn."
- A person guilty of the unauthorized sharing of a sexually explicit photo of another individual is subject to a misdemeanor. This statute contains escalating penalties for repeat offenders.
- The new law also addresses "sextortion," a term to describe when an individual threatens to disseminate an explicit image of another in order to obtain a benefit for themselves, monetary or otherwise.

Status: Signed Into Law

Improving community notification about sex offenders

- This law alters requirements about community registration and notification regarding sex offenders, which include adding several provisions of the federal Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act in order to improve local notification procedures.
- Among the provisions added to state law is a requirement that law enforcement professionals attempt to validate the home addresses provided by sex offenders.
- Previously, Rhode Island was not in compliance with federal law, which resulted in the state losing 10% of federal grant money it would have received.

Status: Signed Into Law

Protecting children and staff in Rhode Island schools

- This law creates a Rhode Island School Safety Committee to review all school safety assessments and to provide recommendations and assistance to increase the safety of students and school personnel.
- Every school district is required to submit its school safety assessment and emergency action plan to the School Safety Committee every 3 years for a comprehensive review.
- The law is intended to provide technical support to all school districts from experts in the field, including fire and police personnel, to ensure all approaches to student safety are known to the districts.

Status: Signed Into Law

Seeking safety mechanisms for conditional licenses of drunk-driving offenders

- This bill would grant a judge or magistrate the discretion to impose requirements on individuals seeking conditional hardship licenses after drunk-driving convictions, including:
 - Blood and/or urine testing; or
 - The use of an ignition interlock system that can detect alcohol in a person's system and prevent the vehicle from starting.
- The legislation also would require that any person suspected of driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol who refuses to submit to a chemical test would be given notice of the state's implied consent law. If someone refuses that chemical test, certain penalties can be imposed upon them.

Status: Passed the Senate



In the News

Public Safety

Senate Bill No. 2492 Substitute A

R.I. lawmakers approve red flag, bump stock bans

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (WJAR) — Rhode Island lawmakers on Thursday approved two bills aimed at gun control across the state.

Source Channel 10 WJAR-TV

Date May 31, 2018

First, the so-called red flag bill would allow courts to take guns away from people deemed a threat to others or themselves and prohibit them from purchasing guns. Violators would face up to 10 years behind bars.

“This legislation is a way to stop tragedies before they happen,” Senate Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin, who sponsored the legislation for the Senate, noted in a press release. “Of course, someone who has guns and is making serious threats to harm people with them should not be armed. Too often, after a mass shooting we learn about all the warning signs people saw from the shooter and wonder why they still had guns. But the truth is, there isn’t always a legal means to stop them. Our legislation provides a speedy but fair process to ensure that those who pose a legitimate risk do not remain armed.”

Continue Reading on: <https://turnto10.com/politics/ri-lawmakers-approve-red-flag-bump-stock-bans>

Senate Bill No. 2639 Substitute A

Governor signs law requiring school-safety plans, review panel

Also on Monday, the governor signed into law legislation forbidding the advertising of unhealthy foods to children in schools, and legislation requiring hospitals to adopt policies on handling smoke generated during surgical procedures.

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Legislation that calls for school districts to adopt safety plans for their schools and file those plans with a statewide school safety committee was signed into law on Monday.

Source The Providence Journal

Date June 4, 2018

Author Mark Reynolds

Under the law signed by Gov. Gina Raimondo, both the existence of the Rhode Island School Safety Committee and the process for the safety plans are codified. The districts must provide the plans to the safety committee every three years for the committee’s review and recommendation.

“It’s another step to ensure the safety of our students in schools,” said the chairman of the safety committee, state police Capt. Derek Borek. “Anything we can do to ensure the safety of our children in our schools is the goal of the safety committee.”

Continue Reading on: <http://www.providencejournal.com/news/20180604/governor-signs-law-requiring-school-safety-plans-review-panel>



Press Releases

Public Safety

Senate Bill No. 2492 Substitute A

“Red Flag” Law allows seizure of firearms from dangerous individuals

Date June 1, 2018

Link [Read online](#)

**Red flag bill, bump stocks ban now law
Governor signs bills passed by General Assembly
yesterday**

STATE HOUSE – Following passage by the General Assembly yesterday, Gov. Gina M. Raimondo today signed into law two bills to prevent gun violence and mass shootings: “red flag” legislation that allows courts to disarm individuals who are believed by law enforcement to represent a violent threat to themselves or others, and a ban on bump stocks and other rapid-fire gun modifications.

The first bill, sponsored in the Senate by Senate Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin and in the House by Rep. Dennis M. Canario, is known as a “red flag” law because it allows police to seek from Superior Court an “extreme risk protective order” that prohibits an individual from possessing firearms, based on threats and other warning signs that the person might commit violence.

“With this new law, we can truly prevent tragedies. People who are demonstrably unstable and are making serious threats should not be armed. All too often after a mass shooting we learn about all the warning signs people saw from the shooter and wonder why they still had guns. Unfortunately, it’s frequently because there isn’t always a legal means to disarm them. Finally, here in our state and in others that have been adopting red flag laws, we will have a speedy but fair process to ensure that those who pose a legitimate risk do not remain armed,” said Senator Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence).

Said Representative Canario (D-Dist. 71, Portsmouth, Little Compton, Tiverton), “This new law will disarm those who pose a serious threat for the protection of children and the public. As a retired police officer with more than 25 years of experience in the law enforcement field, I thank my fellow officers for their leadership and commitment to addressing this critical situation. With this new law, we have an important means of stopping troubled individuals from carrying out violence and preventing tragic events.”

The governor signed the bills in a State House ceremony today, flanked by House Speaker Nicholas Mattiello, Senate President Dominick Ruggiero, both cosponsors of the red flag bill, and other legislators. The event was attended by gun safety advocates, many of whom wore orange in recognition of National Gun Violence Awareness Day.

[Continue Reading](#)

Rhode Island Senate

improves

Quality of Life



@risenate



@RISenate

Improving the Lives of Rhode Island Youth

Senate Bill No. 2678 Substitute A



Protecting driving privileges for DACA recipients

1

The Senate took decisive action this year in response to pending federal litigation that may reduce or eliminate protections created by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program for immigrant youth who were brought to the United States as children.

2

This law allows DACA recipients to continue to be eligible for Rhode Island driver's licenses.

3 The Division of Motor Vehicles has always granted driver's licenses to DACA recipients, and this legislation codifies this practice into state law. Individuals hoping to qualify for a driver's license will need to provide proof of current or past participation in the DACA program.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



“As many of you already know, my family fled from Colombia when my father’s life was threatened. I was just a teenager when we came here, but now I love my state. I love my country. This is why it is called the ‘American Dream’ because everyone can be someone no matter where they come from.”

Senator Sandra Cano
[The Providence Journal](#)

Giving foster children additional state support

State Budget, Article 15 as amended, Fiscal Year 2019

1 Young adults transitioning out of foster care face significant challenges as they attempt to navigate adulthood on their own. Therefore, the Senate has made it a priority in recent years to make it possible for foster children to remain in state care until age 21, rather than age 18.

2 The Senate introduced a bill in January of 2018 to create a voluntary extension of care program for such children, allowing those who request it to continue receiving support from the Department of Children, Youth and Families.

3 For these vulnerable young people who may otherwise have little to no guidance, the state will now provide housing stipends, job training, educational support, and assistance when they apply for medical and other benefits.

4 Although Senate Bill No. [2022 Substitute A as amended](#) won Senate support, funding for this program was instead incorporated into the state budget for Fiscal Year 2019.

Youth who stay in foster care to age 21 are:

- ↓ less likely to be homeless, incarcerated, and unemployed
- ↓ 38% less likely to become pregnant before age 20
- ↑ more likely to access independent living services

2x ↑

more likely to earn a college degree

Data source: Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative

STATUS

Signed Into Law



“These children deserve a fair shot in life. They did not ask for the hardships they have suffered during childhood, and this program can provide the safety net so many of them desperately need.”

Senator Louis P. DiPalma

Improving the Lives of Rhode Islanders

Senate Bill No. 2734 Substitute B as amended



Providing a new option for home-based care

- 1 This law enables the creation of an independent provider model for at-home care to help the state's aging population and people with disabilities remain in their homes.
- 2 This model creates a system that allows people to hire and manage caregivers of their choice while the state sets parameters and takes on certain responsibilities, such as setting qualification standards and caregiver reimbursement rates.
- 3 Home care workers are critical to improving long-term services and supports for seniors and for people with chronic illnesses and disabilities. Independent provider home care workers will also have the right to collective bargaining, which is a key step toward ensuring this important workforce has a unified voice.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



“Ninety percent of older Americans prefer home care. Not only is it more comfortable for seniors, it’s more cost-effective, as we’ve seen in states like Massachusetts. High-quality home care is what people want, and it saves money.”

Senator Maryellen Goodwin, Senate Majority Whip

Investing in Rhode Island's seniors

State Budget, Article 1 as amended, Fiscal Year 2019

- 1 This year's budget doubles—from \$400,000 to \$800,000—the state's designated grant funding for senior centers.
- 2 The state allocates grant funding to each municipality based on how many people aged 65 and older live there, and the municipalities allocate funds to the state's 48 senior centers in a manner they deem appropriate.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



Improving the state's Aging and Disability Resource Center

State Budget, Article 13 as amended, Fiscal Year 2019

- 1 This initiative improves a multi-agency state effort to provide a comprehensive database and interactive website to help the state's older adults, residents with disabilities, and family caregivers learn where they can find help. Until now, this effort has been known as The Point, and it receives \$250,000 in federal funding.
- 2 The Aging and Disability Resource Center will:
 - Promote efforts to help people stay in their homes longer, with community-based services, rather than going into institutional care;
 - Assist Rhode Islanders and their families in making informed choices and decisions about long-term service and support options; and
 - Provide a toll-free information number to link callers to care, a comprehensive database of information, and community education and outreach.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



Protecting Rhode Island Animals

Senate Bill No. 2055 Substitute A



Limiting the tethering of dogs

- 1 This law restricts the tethering of dogs by setting limits on the length of time a dog may be tethered and the types of tether that can be used.
- 2 Dogs must be provided with defined, adequate shelter.
- 3 Animal control officers will now be authorized to give written exemptions to dog owners, which can be renewed annually. This exemption power is intended to recognize that conditions may vary for hunting dogs, dogs on farms that protect herds, and sled dogs.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



Senate Bill No. 2980



Saving Rhode Island's retired research dogs and cats

- 1 This law requires higher education research facilities to make reasonable efforts to offer research dogs and cats for adoption after academic studies are completed.
- 2 Animals may be placed through private adoptions or through an animal rescue or shelter organization.
- 3 The attending veterinarian at the educational facility has the authority to assess the animal's health before a dog or cat is placed for adoption.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



Senate Bill No. 2135 Substitute A



Stiffening penalties for repeat animal abusers

- 1 This law raises penalties for individuals convicted of multiple animal abuse offenses and seeks to prevent known animal abusers from living with or owning animals.
- 2 An individual convicted of multiple animal abuse violations within a 10-year period will now face a prison sentence of up to 6 years; a fine of between \$500 and \$5,000; or both.
- 3 Individuals guilty of their first animal abuse offense are prohibited from living with animals for 5 years. Repeat offenders are prohibited from living with animals for 15 years.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



“Animal abuse is a sickening crime against the innocent that should be taken more seriously. Animals, of course, cannot speak for themselves, and the result is that their suffering often goes unpunished, or their abuser is given little more than a slap on the wrist and carries on mistreating animals. There should be more serious penalties, and above all else, abusers must not be allowed to have easy access to more animals in their homes. If we are serious about protecting animals from abuse, we should start by getting them out of the homes of convicted abusers.”

Senator Frank A. Ciccone III
[Providence Journal article](#)

Appendix: Quality of Life

Senate Bill No. 2133

Expanding the state's Homeless Bill of Rights

- This law prohibits any homeless person in possession of a service animal from being denied access to any homeless shelter.
- Service animals are those as defined in the Americans with Disabilities Act and in state and federal Fair Housing Acts.

Status: Signed Into Law

Senate Bill No. 2226 as amended

Offering flu shots to older adults

- This law aims to reduce flu-related hospitalizations and deaths by requiring hospitals to offer flu shots during flu season before discharging all eligible patients who are 65 or older.
- Flu shots help prevent hospitalizations, and 54% to 70% of flu-related hospitalizations are for individuals who are 65 or older.
- In the 2017-2018 flu season, 47 people in Rhode Island died of flu-related causes, and 43 of those deaths were individuals 65 or older.

Status: Signed Into Law

Senate Bill No. 2231 Substitute A

Supporting family caregivers

- This law aims to provide support to family caregivers who help older Rhode Islanders age in the community and at home.
- The duties of the Department of Elderly Affairs are further defined with regard to elder caregiver respite services.
- Elder caregiver respite services are subject to available funding, and such services include home health/homemaker care; adult day services; assisted living and nursing facility care; and a web-based caregiver support information center.

Status: Signed Into Law

Expanding the Mary Brennan public policy fellowship

- The Mary Brennan fellowship fund provides a part-time, semester-long placement with the Governor’s Commission on Disabilities to research disability policy.
- The program was previously limited to college students with disabilities, and placements were only available in Providence. This law now allows young adults with disabilities who are not in school to access the fellowship program, and it expands the placement of fellows beyond Providence.

Status: Signed Into Law

Expanding protections for the elderly

- The Peter Falk Criminal Isolation of Elders Act is named for actor Peter Falk, who is most famous for playing Lieutenant Columbo on the long-running television series, “Columbo,” and who worked on elder abuse legislation after his mother’s death.
- This bill would criminalize the isolation of an elder and sought to ensure that nursing homes and caregivers of elderly individuals would notify close relatives about changes in a person’s condition or status.
- Concerned family members would have legal standing to request access to their loved ones.

Status: Vetoed by the Governor

Allowing neighborhood pet sitters

- This law allows people to provide paid care for up to four animals in their residences without being required to follow the rules, regulations, and licensing that kennels must follow.
- Pet sitters must still abide by the Department of Environmental Management standards for animal health.
- The state retains the authority to enforce animal care facility requirements and to inspect areas where the animals are kept upon receipt of a written complaint.

Status: Signed Into Law

Improving access to family and friends for people with developmental disabilities

- This legislation would allow people with developmental disabilities who have individualized plans at the health facilities where they live to have greater autonomy over their daily lives.
- The intent is to ensure that individuals have “reasonable access at any time to telephone communication” and are able to receive visitors at any time.
- These changes are necessary to bring Rhode Island into compliance with federal law.

Status: Passed the Senate

Protecting the safety of newborn puppies

- This law prohibits the transfer of puppies before they are fully weaned, a practice that is now punishable by prison and/or a fine, unless a veterinarian grants written approval of such transfer.
- The Rhode Island Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals supported this legislation because the agency receives dozens of complaints each year about the sale of puppies that are too young, a practice that can lead to nutritional, health, and behavioral issues for dogs.
- The law does not apply to nonprofit organizations, animal shelters, or pounds that place puppies into foster care.

Status: Signed Into Law

Senate to examine elderly abuse and financial exploitation

- This resolution creates a nine-member Senate task force to examine the prevalence of elder abuse in Rhode Island and to make recommendations to the Senate about how to better protect seniors and to foster their independence.
- The study commission would include two state senators, a representative from an agency that works with victims of elder abuse, the state director of the AARP Rhode Island, and other stakeholders.
- The task force will issue its report to the Rhode Island Senate no later than Feb. 5, 2019, and the task force will expire on June 30, 2019.

Status: Resolution Was Enacted



In the News

Quality of Life

Senate Bill No. 2678 Substitute A

General Assembly passes legislation that would protect Rhode Island 'dreamers'

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (WPRI) -- The General Assembly passed legislation that would continue to protect undocumented immigrants living in Rhode Island.

Source Channel 12 WPRI-TV

Date June 14, 2018

Authors Melanie DaSilva and Sarah Doiron

Rep. Shelby Maldonado and Senate Majority Leader Michael McCaffrey proposed the legislation which would protect immigrant children who were initially protected under Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).

The DACA policy was put in place in 2012 to allow young people to remain in the country with temporary lawful status. Approximately 3,300 Rhode Islanders are eligible for the DACA program, but only 1,200 signed up before the program was terminated.

Continue Reading on: <https://www.wpri.com/news/local-news/providence/general-assembly-passes-legislation-that-would-protect-daca-dreamers-in-ri/1240065724#>



Press Releases

Quality of Life

**Senate Bill No. 2022
Substitute A as amended**

Giving foster children additional state support

Date May 23, 2018

Sen. DiPalma bill to create young adult voluntary extension of care program passes Senate

Link [Read online](#)

STATE HOUSE – Sen. Louis P. DiPalma’s (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Little Compton, Newport, Tiverton) legislation (2018-S 2022Aaa) that would create a young adult voluntary extension of care program to extend the age of foster care from age 18 to age 21 was passed by the Rhode Island Senate tonight. The program would offer a range of programs and services to ensure successful transitions to independence and adulthood for young adults in foster care.

“This bill gives our kids in care of the state the best possible shot to become happy, functional, and productive adults in our society. The data clearly demonstrates that without this program, these kids face tremendous obstacles toward adulthood, including homelessness, joblessness, teen pregnancy and incarceration, which is extremely costly to the society as a whole and specifically the state. These children deserve a fair shot in life. They did not ask for the hardships they have suffered during childhood, and this program can provide the safety net so many of them desperately need,” said Senator DiPalma.

Rhode Island previously offered extended care to foster children up to 21 years old but the program was scaled back to 18 years old in 2007.

The legislation calls for a voluntary, age appropriate, court-supervised program of services and resources to be implemented, and the proposal is specifically designed for young adults to maximize their self-determination and support their movement toward self-sufficiency. The bill does not hold young adults in the same system that they were in as children, but incorporates national best practice to meet their needs as emerging young adults. And, with this new approach, we’ll be able to leverage federal funding to offset state investments.

Twenty-four states including Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, Nebraska, Ohio, and California have extended their systems of care to 21 with similar initiatives.

[Continue Reading](#)



Press Releases

Quality of Life

Senate Bill No. 2055 Substitute A

Limiting the tethering of dogs

Date July 5, 2018

**Governor signs bill to prohibit animal mistreatment—
failing to provide water, shelter, care**

Link [Read online](#)

STATE HOUSE — Gov. Gina Raimondo has signed legislation introduced by Rep. Patricia A. Serpa (D-Dist. 27, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick) and Sen. Erin Lynch Prata (D-Dist. 31, Warwick, Cranston) that prohibits mistreatment of animals — specifically the failure to provide adequate water, shelter or veterinary care.

The law (2018-H 7045B, 2018-S 2055A) also prevents exposure for a period of more than 15 minutes whenever a weather advisory or warning has been issued.

“I have received several phone calls from people who are concerned about the welfare of dogs during deep freezes like the one we had earlier this year,” said Representative Serpa. “They and I want to guarantee that these animals will be protected. This legislation specifically addresses animal mistreatment by neglect and gives them better protections under the law.”

Representative Serpa filed the legislation in the wake of an incident in Warwick that garnered national attention. According to news reports, the owner of several pit bulls came under public protest for keeping the dogs tethered outside in order to acclimate them to cold temperatures.

The current law, which the General Assembly enacted last year, makes it illegal to keep any dog outside when the ambient temperature is above or below the industry standard for the weather safety scale as set forth in the most recent adopted version of the Tufts Animal Care and Condition Weather Safety Scale. However, the law makes an exemption for any person raising or training a gun dog or hunting dog.

“This bill removes the exception to the law and more specifically spells out protections for dogs in cold weather,” said Senator Lynch Prata. “It also spells out the definition of ‘adequate shelter’ as one that provides sufficient space for the dog to maintain comfortable rest, normal posture and range of movement.”

Exposing any dog to adverse weather conditions strictly for the purpose of conditioning would be prohibited under the legislation. While the legislation would allow for certain hunting dogs, dogs guarding livestock or sled dogs to stay outside, such action would require written authorization from an animal control officer. The written authorization would have to be renewed annually.



Press Releases

Quality of Life

Senate Bill No. 2135 Substitute A

Stiffening penalties for repeat animal abusers

Date July 6, 2018

Bill enacted to stiffen animal abuse penalties, including loss of animal custody

Link [Read online](#)

STATE HOUSE – Legislation sponsored by Sen. Frank A. Ciccone III and Rep. Robert A. Nardolillo III and signed by Gov. Gina M. Raimondo this week will stiffen penalties for animal abuse and prohibit those convicted of it from living with animals for either five or 15 years, depending on the severity of the crime.

“Animal abuse is a sickening crime against the innocent that should be taken more seriously. Animals, of course, cannot speak for themselves, and the result is that their suffering often goes unpunished or their abuser is given little more than a slap on the wrist, and carries on mistreating animals. There should be more serious penalties, and above all else, abusers must not be allowed to have easy access to more animals in their homes. If we are serious about protecting animals from abuse, we should start by getting them out of the homes of convicted abusers,” said Senator Ciccone (D-Dist. 7, Providence, North Providence).

The legislation (2018-S 2135A, 2018-H 8170aa), which took effect upon passage, prohibits anyone who is convicted or pleads nolo contendere to overwork, mistreatment or failure to feed animals from possessing or residing with any animal for five years for a misdemeanor, 15 years for a felony. Currently, judges may decide to prohibit a person convicted of animal cruelty from having animals, but they don’t always.

It would increase the penalty for repeat convictions for animal cruelty to a maximum of six years in prison, a fine of up to \$5,000 and a mandatory 100 hours of community restitution.

“No animal should ever be handed over to someone convicted of animal cruelty,” said Representative Nardolillo (R-Dist. 28, Coventry). “Our courts have the power to protect these innocent creatures from further abuse but only if they are willing to hand down the appropriate sentences. This bill will be a vital first step toward ensuring that no animal in Rhode Island is ever forced to live out their days under inhumane conditions,” said Rep. Nardolillo.

In April, an Exeter man who’d been found with nearly 100 animals living in unsanitary conditions was convicted of two charges including overwork, mistreatment or failure to feed animals and unnecessary cruelty to animals. He was only fined \$200 for his actions, and three dogs were returned to him. He had faced animal abuse allegations in the past, but maintained custody of the animals.



Press Releases

Quality of Life

Senate Bill No. 2734 Substitute B

Providing a new option for home-based care

Date July 6, 2018

New law establishes additional home-based care option

Link [Read online](#)

STATE HOUSE – Legislation sponsored by Senate Majority Whip Maryellen Goodwin and Rep. Christopher R. Blazejewski to create a new long-term care option for seniors and people with disabilities has been signed into law by Gov. Gina M. Raimondo.

The legislation (2018-S 2734Baa, 2018-H 7803Aaa) establishes in Rhode Island the “independent provider” model of at-home care, which allows consumers to hire and manage caregivers of their choice while the state takes on certain responsibilities, such as setting caregivers’ wages, qualification standards and hours.

By increasing both availability and quality of at-home care options, the new law’s ultimate goal is to move Rhode Island toward greater use of care in the community rather than in nursing facilities, since at-home care is both more comfortable and satisfying for consumers and less expensive than nursing facilities.

“Presently, Rhode Island ranks 42nd in the nation in terms of investment in home care. Ninety percent of older Americans prefer home care. Not only is it more comfortable for seniors, it’s more cost-effective, as we’ve seen in states like Massachusetts. High-quality home care is what people want, and it saves money. I’m proud to support this effort to help make excellent home care available to more Rhode Islanders,” said Senator Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence).

Said Representative Blazejewski (D-Dist. 2, Providence), “There is little question that people prefer to stay in their homes as long as possible. Particularly now, as the over-65 population in our state is rapidly expanding, Rhode Island must shift more of our long-term care resources toward supporting home care. Our legislation will help provide more options for home-based services, enhance access to them and establish standards that assure high-quality care.”

Currently around 77 percent of Medicaid funding for long-term services and supports goes to nursing facility care rather than community-based care. Those who use community-based care generally go through agencies or find, hire and manage a caregiver on their own. This bill would create a third option.

[Continue Reading](#)



Press Releases

Quality of Life

Senate Bill No. 2980

Saving Rhode Island's retired research dogs and cats

Date July 5, 2018

New law promotes adoption of research animals

Link [Read online](#)

STATE HOUSE – The governor has signed into law legislation sponsored by House Deputy Speaker Charlene M. Lima and Senate President Dominick J. Ruggiero to ensure that dogs and cats used as test subjects at higher education research facilities in Rhode Island be afforded an opportunity to live out their lives in loving homes.

The Research Animal Retirement Act (2018-H 7414, 2018-S 2980) now requires higher education research facilities, upon completion of any research involving a dog or cat, to determine whether the animal is adoptable. If it is, the facility must make reasonable efforts to offer the animal for adoption, instead of euthanizing it. Facilities could work with shelters or agencies that seek adoptive homes for pets.

“These research animals have endured a lifetime of suffering in order to help us humans lead a healthier and longer life. The least we can do is to provide them with a mechanism for adoption as a small thank you for their suffering in the name of science,” said Representative Lima (D-Dist. 14, Cranston, Providence). “The least they deserve is a chance at a happy and peaceful end of their life. This legislation will give them that chance.”

Similar legislation has been passed in California, Connecticut, Minnesota, Nevada and New York and has been introduced in several other states.

“The practice of euthanizing research animals once they’ve outlived their usefulness is an abhorrent one,” said President Ruggiero (D-Dist. 4, North Providence, Providence). “It’s not only inhumane; it’s unthinkable. This legislation will establish and encourage a process of adoption for these animals — some of which have endured a lifetime of misery.”

Legislators received visits at the State House from a four-legged advocate for the bill — Tucker, a friendly beagle who was adopted after serving as a research animal — when the legislation was heard in House and Senate committees, and when the bill passed the House in April.

Rhode Island Senate

supports

Reforming the Criminal Justice System



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Reforming the Criminal Justice System

Senate Bill No. 2447



Allowing the expungement of decriminalized offenses

- 1 This law allows an individual to petition the court for the expungement of a criminal conviction if the underlying offense has been subsequently decriminalized.
- 2 This reform effort removes unnecessary barriers to employment and housing for individuals convicted of crimes that are no longer crimes.
- 3 For example, marijuana possession is now a civil infraction under the jurisdiction of the Rhode Island Traffic Tribunal, yet thousands of Rhode Islanders may be denied employment opportunities due to criminal convictions from the time when possession was still a crime.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



“To permit individuals to be stigmatized and penalized for infractions that become decriminalized, especially in light of racial disparities in the criminal justice system, is at odds with Rhode Island’s long and honorable history of promoting equality and ensuring that all Rhode Islanders can work and live in a nondiscriminatory environment.”

Michael Evora, Executive Director of the Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights

Senate Bill No. 2823
Substitute A



Protecting language interpreters and privileged communication

- 1 This law protects interpreters from being called to testify in state court proceedings about confidential statements made to them by people with limited English proficiency.
- 2 All communication between interpreters and people with limited English proficiency is privileged unless the individual making the statement gives consent or there is a court order for the interpreter to testify.

STATUS

Signed Into Law



Aligning with Best Practices

This law helps align Rhode Island rules regarding court interpreters with best practices recommended by the National Center for State Courts.

“It is especially important that the interpreter understand and uphold the attorney-client privilege, which requires confidentiality with respect to any communication between attorney and client. This rule also applies to other types of privileged communications.”

See more: [Court Interpretation: Model Guides for Policy and Practice in the State Courts](#)

Appendix: Reforming the Criminal Justice System

Senate Bill No. 2268 Substitute A

Safely transporting incarcerated women who are pregnant

- This law prohibits sheriffs from using restraints on pregnant prisoners in their third trimester while they are being transported to and from court proceedings, because such restraints can result in unanticipated health risks.
- The Healthy Pregnancies for Incarcerated Women Act requires the Department of Corrections to submit annual reports to the General Assembly detailing the number of pregnant women incarcerated, and the number who were subject to the use of restraints.

Status: Signed Into Law

Senate Bill No. 2430

Protecting juveniles suspected of delinquent or criminal behavior

- This bill would ensure that juveniles and their parents are well-informed of their rights during an interrogation.
- This legislation detailed the circumstances under which a juvenile could have been interrogated by law enforcement without the presence of a parent or guardian and the admissibility of any evidence gained from an interrogation that did not meet the provisions of this legislation.
- Research has shown that many young people do not understand the rights available to them in the interrogation room and are less likely to invoke their rights, resulting in involuntary statements that otherwise would not have been given.
- According to the Center on Wrongful Convictions of Youth at Northwestern University's Pritzker School of Law, people under the age of 18 are three times more likely to confess falsely than adults. Minors are also significantly more likely to implicate other people falsely, likely in an attempt to please authority figures or to end an unpleasant interrogation faster.

Status: Passed the Senate

Eliminating mandatory waivers from Family Court proceedings

- This act will narrow the definition of an adult for the purposes of Family Court proceedings to only those individuals who are 18 years of age and older.
- The language that provided for mandatory waivers out of Family Court for 17-year-olds who were charged with murder, first-degree sexual assault, first-degree child molestation, or assault with intent to commit murder was removed from the statute.
- The Attorney General can still seek a discretionary waiver that would allow the court to determine whether to hear the case in Family Court, based on the seriousness of the offense, the child's amenability to treatment, previous history with the Family Court or with Probation, and protection for the public.

Status: Signed Into Law

Aligning Rhode Island's definition of a felony with other states

- This legislation would continue elements of the Justice Reinvestment initiative previously spearheaded by the Senate, and it would redefine what constitutes a "felony" under Rhode Island law.
- For the last 30 years, Rhode Island has been the only state in the country where an individual can be charged with a felony even though the punishment for the crime carries no prison sentence.

Status: Passed the Senate



Press Releases

Reforming the Criminal Justice System

Senate Bill No. 2447

Expungement bill regarding crimes that are decriminalized

Date May 31, 2018

Senate approves bill to allow expungement for subsequently decriminalized crimes

Link [Read online](#)

STATE HOUSE – The Senate today gave its approval to legislation sponsored by Sen. Harold M. Metts to allow people to petition to expunge their criminal records for crimes that were subsequently decriminalized.

The legislation, which now goes to the House, is aimed at leveling the playing field and helping people support themselves without being held back by a criminal record for an offense that is no longer considered a crime.

Since the state has decriminalized possession of small amounts of marijuana, his bill would mean many Rhode Islanders would not be haunted needlessly by records for a decriminalized act.

“As a state, we have slowly been moving toward recognizing the unintended consequences of many of our criminal laws, particularly those involving illicit drugs. One of those effects has been poverty, lack of financial security and marginalization for the families of those people who have criminal records. This problem very disproportionately affects people of color and those who were already poor. If an act has been decriminalized since a person was charged and paid their price for it, that person shouldn’t have to keep paying the price in the form of being denied jobs and other opportunities because of their criminal record,” said Senator Metts (D-Dist. 6, Providence).

“Once an act has been decriminalized and we’ve decided it doesn’t count as an offense against society, there is no point to leaving that albatross hanging around the necks of those who were previously convicted. Let them move on, and they can better support themselves and their families and contribute to our communities and our state,” he continued.

Under the bill (2018-S 2447), a person with a record for a crime that has been decriminalized could petition the court in which they were convicted for expungement. The court shall grant it without costs provided the individual has completed all conditions of his or her sentence and paid all resulting fines, fees and costs.

The bill is cosponsored by Sen. Paul V. Jabour (D-Dist. 5, Providence), Sen. Ana B. Quezada (D-Dist. 2, Providence), Sen. Elizabeth A. Crowley (D-Dist. 16, Central Falls, Pawtucket) and Sen. Frank S. Lombardi (D-Dist. 26, Cranston)

The Rhode Island Senate

2018

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