

2018 Rhode Island General Assembly Accomplishments

PUBLIC SAFETY/ JUSTICE

- The General Assembly passed two laws 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.
- Legislators passed “[Kristen’s Law](#),” which will allow judges to sentence drug dealers who sell fatal doses of illicit drugs to up to life in prison.
- The legislature amended the authorization for municipalities to use [speed cameras](#) in school zones. The new law mandates more signage and would change the initial violation ticket cost from \$95 to \$50 for each offense. It would also be expunged after three years.
- The General Assembly strengthened Rhode Island’s outdated law on [bombs and other explosive devices](#) by addressing loopholes that have hindered the filing of charges following incidents involving their use.
- Lawmakers made [revenge porn](#) a crime and created criminal penalties for those who engage in “sextortion.”
- Legislators voted to [expunge](#) the records for crimes that were subsequently decriminalized.
- The legislature [banned the use of restraints on pregnant prisoners](#) during transports.
- The General Assembly passed legislation that will continue the status quo relating to operator and chauffeur’s licenses to [approved recipients under the DACA program](#).

TAXPAYER/WORKER/CONSUMER PROTECTION

- The budget passed by the General Assembly provided \$54.7 million to fully fund the second year of the [phase-out of the excise tax](#) on automobiles.
- Lawmakers voted to help members of the insolvent [St. Joseph’s Health Services pension plan](#) reach settlements in their multiple class-action lawsuits.
- Lawmakers added five years to the life of an expiring law that keeps families in their homes and avoids foreclosure through [mediation](#).
- The legislature charged the DMV with [notifying drivers when there are taxes due](#) at the time of registration renewal.
- Legislators [strengthened transparency in the Hospital Conversion Act](#) by requiring the Attorney General and the Department of Health to conduct interviews under oath with a stenographer present when gathering information during conversions.
- Lawmakers directed the Division of Motor Vehicles to begin offering [titles for RVs](#), something that’s required by banks.
- The General Assembly approved legislation to prohibit consumer reporting agencies from [charging consumers a fee for a credit freeze](#).

- Legislators expanded the [registration of motor vehicle airbags](#) to prohibit the manufacture and importation of counterfeits.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- The General Assembly passed enabling legislation to allow public support for a [new baseball stadium](#) in downtown Pawtucket. The stadium would be the future home of the Pawtucket Red Sox.
- The General Assembly passed legislation to alter the boundaries of a parcel within the [I-195 Redevelopment District](#). The change is necessary in order for a potential construction project to move forward.
- The [2019 budget](#) passed by lawmakers provides \$11 million in job training funds through Real Jobs Rhode Island, and continues funding for other economic development programs, including the Rebuild Rhode Island construction tax credit and the Wavemaker Fellowship program.
- Under a new law, the Department of Transportation will need to coordinate with the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation to help small businesses that will be affected by [RhodeWorks construction projects](#).
- Legislators voted to lighten the regulatory burden on operators of [food trucks](#) by creating a state mobile food establishment registration.
- The Assembly passed laws making it easier for truck drivers to acquire and maintain [commercial driver's licenses](#).

HEALTH

- Legislators [restored several budget cuts](#) to health and human service programs, including the \$18 million proposed cut to programs that serve the intellectually or developmentally disabled and a \$15.7 million cut to Medicaid disproportionate care. They also eliminated \$9.9 million in new copays for Medicaid enrollees.
- The General Assembly approved legislation to ensure that [mastectomies are covered by insurance](#) in Rhode Island.
- Lawmakers add [electronic smoking, vaping to workplace smoking ban](#).
- Legislators empowered patients to [curb the possibility of opioid addiction](#) by allowing for partial-fill prescriptions, creating a non-opioid directive form, funding the creation of a behavioral healthcare link for crises, allowing EMTs and other emergency responders to provide Narcan to addicts or their friends or family members, and to develop standards for co-prescribing Narcan along with opioids.
- Legislators [banned the advertising of unhealthy foods](#) in public schools.
- The Assembly voted to [permit medical consent to minors](#) for prenatal, delivery and postnatal care.
- Lawmakers passed a law requiring health insurance plans to provide coverage for a [12-month supply of birth control](#) to all those who are insured.
- The Assembly required hospitals to [offer influenza vaccine to hospital patients](#) who are 65 or older.

CHILD PROTECTION

- The budget passed by the General Assembly includes an increase in Child Care Assistance program rates and [establishes a tiered reimbursement rate](#) structure for all age groups (infants – age 12).
- The state budget included the [voluntary extension of services up to age 21](#) for those who are in foster care on their 18th birthday.
- The legislature passed a law to examine the [safety of Rhode Island’s schools](#) and to ensure that school safety plans are adopted in each school department.
- Legislators [prohibited the use of tanning beds by minors](#).
- The General Assembly amended the law regarding [child neglect and cruelty](#), moving jurisdiction of those crimes from Family Court to Superior Court.
- Lawmakers required public schools to install and maintain [carbon monoxide detectors](#).
- The General Assembly stiffened the penalties for those [driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs with a child](#) in the vehicle.
- The General Assembly approved legislation to improve the effectiveness of the state’s law [requiring school officials to report sexual abuse](#).

EDUCATION

- The budget includes a [\\$250 million bond referendum to rebuild schools](#) across the state.
- Lawmakers agreed to provide \$6 million in additional funding for the Rhode Island Promise program that allows residents [two free years at Community College of Rhode Island](#).
- Legislators [added \\$21.9 million in education aid](#), bringing it to \$976.3 million this year.
- Legislators directed the Department of Education to incorporate [substance abuse and suicide prevention education](#) into the health education curriculum.
- The General Assembly directed colleges and universities to develop [suicide prevention policies](#).
- Lawmakers passed legislation that will increase [education on consent](#) and sexual activity in secondary schools.
- The legislature created a process for the Department of Education to collect and organize information concerning the workload and scope of the duties and responsibilities performed by [school social workers](#).

SENIORS

- The General Assembly established 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.

- The state budget bill establishes an \$800,000 [community senior services grant](#) program to provide grants for senior centers and programs.
- The state budget also established the [Rhode Island Aging and Disability Resource Center](#) to assist individuals in crafting long-term care plans for themselves and family members.
- The budget also reflects a settlement reached over [reimbursement rates to nursing homes](#). Nursing homes will be receiving a total of 2.5 percent above the current rates by Oct. 1. This translates to approximately \$9 million in additional funding.
- The [Livable Home Modification Grant](#) program was included in the state budget to allow eligible aging homeowners and renters to make their existing residences more accessible so they can stay safely in their homes longer.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

- The legislature tightened the [penalties for animal abuse crimes](#), including forbidding perpetrators from living with animals for five years for misdemeanors, 15 years for felonies. It increases the penalty for repeat convictions for animal cruelty to a maximum of six years in prison, a fine of up to \$5,000.
- Lawmakers [improved animal protection laws](#) to prevent animals, including hunting dogs, from being outside in extreme temperatures without permission of an animal control officer.
- The General Assembly [outlawed battery cages for egg-laying hens](#), effective in 2026.
- The Assembly voted to ensure that dogs and cats used as test subjects at higher education research facilities in Rhode Island be [made available for adoption](#).
- The legislature [prohibited the sale of puppies that aren't fully weaned](#) without written approval from a licensed veterinarian.
- Lawmakers created a law [distinguishing petsitters from professional kennels](#), but allowing inspections if animal safety complaints are made against them.

ENVIRONMENT

- The legislature included a \$47.3 million bond referendum in the budget [for green economy and clean water initiatives](#).
- The General Assembly [restructured the Coastal Resources Management Council](#) to reflect separation of powers and better enable it to perform its duties.
- A legislative commission was approved to study the possibility of a [recycling program for multi-family properties](#) and condo complexes.

VETERANS/MILITARY

- The legislature directed the Department of Education to [utilize the federal Troops to Teachers program](#), and further provides that the implementation of the program would be contingent on federal funding.
- The General Assembly passed the [Military Property Tax Exemption bill](#), eliminating the requirement for a veteran to have achieved a Campaign Ribbon or Expeditionary Medal to qualify for state veterans benefits.
- Lawmakers named the recreation room in the new Rhode Island Veterans Home after [Army Specialist Michael Andrade](#), a Rhode Island National Guardsman who died in Operation Iraqi Freedom.