



State of Rhode Island

**Department of State | Office of the Secretary of State**

**Gregg M. Amore, Secretary of State**

March 12, 2024

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney, Chair  
House Committee on Finance

RE: FY2025 Department of State Budget

Dear Chair Abney,

The Department of State serves Rhode Islanders by promoting transparent government, supporting businesses, and strengthening our democracy through a commitment to civic engagement, secure elections, and empowering voters. I write in support of the Department of State's FY2025 proposed budget, as well as additional requests, to ensure our team can achieve this mission.

After administering the first Congressional special election in over fifty years, our Elections division is now preparing for the Presidential Preference Primary in April as well as the fall statewide primary and Presidential Election, focusing on ensuring the elections are fair, fast, accurate, and secure. Our Business Services division is managing the registrations of more than 100,000 entities doing business in Rhode Island. The first cohort of our Civic Leadership Program – 86 students representing 41 high schools – has spent months learning about State government and our democracy. Many will soon participate in a three-day-long Summit that will provide students the opportunity to collaborate with peers, participate in professionally guided workshops, and encourage them to think critically about issues and evaluate potential policy solutions. Across our Department, we are connecting with Rhode Islanders in new and exciting ways, as well as providing critical services that allow our state's businesses, non-profits, educational institutions, and democracy to thrive.

As I have already presented, in FY2025, the Department's major initiative is to establish a modern, state of the art, permanent home for the State Archives by building a State Archives and History Center on Capitol Hill. I believe we should highlight our state's history – contained within the Archives' remarkable collection of documents, images, and publications – to benefit Rhode Island's students, educators, researchers, and visitors and as an asset to our economy. The interest is there – when the Independent Man was in the State House, nearly 8,500 visitors came to see him in a single month. Rhode Islanders and tourists alike are ready for a facility that will share Rhode Island's story. I appreciate the Governor's inclusion of a \$60 million general obligation bond and a total of \$10 million in Rhode Island Capital Plan (RICAP) funds in his proposed budget, and I encourage the Committee's support.

In addition to a new State Archives and History Center, we are organizing programming and events that will recognize Rhode Island as a founding colony. The RI250 Commission, created by a joint resolution by the General Assembly, is dedicated to commemorating Rhode Island's pivotal role in shaping the ideals of freedom, equality, and independence throughout American history by coordinating events and curriculum that celebrate the diverse individuals who have contributed to the state's rich heritage. On behalf of the Commission, the Department requested an increase in its appropriation for FY2025 to \$500,000, while the proposed FY2025 budget keeps funding flat at \$100,000. The full appropriation would be used to increase programming to celebrate the semiquincentennial, like bringing Tall Ships back to Narragansett Bay.

As the Department of State's Election division prepares to administer the 2024 election, I ask the Committee to fully fund the Department's FY2025 budget request. The restoration of \$138,000 in funding to the Elections budget will ensure adequate resources for ballot printing; postage and postal services to mail ballots and voter list maintenance mailings; and advertising dollars to conduct a robust voter education campaign to ensure voters have the information necessary to cast a ballot.

Finally, in our capital budget request, the Department of State proposed \$750,000 in RICAP funds to update its *OpenGov* application and website, which includes the Gov Directory, the Open Meetings Portal, and the Boards & Commissions database, which was not included in the Governor's FY2025 proposed budget. Legislation passed in 2023 provided that "the Secretary of State Department shall maintain an up-to-date online directory of government officials" (RI General Laws 22-3-12). This project will enable the Department's Public Information division to comply with this requirement and increase the accuracy and transparency of information for members of the public. It is also essential to meeting my goals of encouraging civic engagement by providing an accurate, user-friendly tool for Rhode Islanders to learn about and engage with their government. I encourage the House Committee on Finance to consider this request and fund the update to the *OpenGov* application with RICAP funds or General Revenue.

I appreciate the support of the House Committee on Finance on this budget to ensure the Department of State can accomplish its mission. If you have any questions about the Governor's FY2025 proposal or these supplemental requests, please feel free to contact Michelle Arias, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, at [marias@sos.ri.gov](mailto:marias@sos.ri.gov). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gregg M. Amore".

Gregg M. Amore  
Secretary of State

cc: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Finance