

**Letter of support – RI State History Center  
FY2027 budget, Article 6 Question 6**

**February 3, 2026**

To Chair Abney and the members of the House Committee on Finance –

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed legislation to establish a Rhode Island State History Center in Providence.

As someone deeply engaged in preserving and promoting our state's heritage, I have a longstanding appreciation for Rhode Island history and genealogy. I have served as Commander of the Pawtuxet Rangers Historic Militia, President of the Rhode Island Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, Governor of the Rhode Island Society of Colonial Wars, and past Governor of the Rhode Island Mayflower Society. Through these roles, I have seen firsthand how meaningful access to authentic historical materials strengthens public understanding of our shared past.

Rhode Island's story is foundational to the American story, yet much of our most significant history is currently inaccessible to the public. The State Archives are located in leased space without permanent exhibit capacity, preventing many irreplaceable documents from being safely displayed. Treasures such as the Gaspee Commission documents, the Battle of Rhode Island map, and historic printings of the Bill of Rights and Declaration of Independence deserve a secure and visible home where Rhode Islanders, students, and visitors can learn from them.

The proposed History Center would provide dedicated exhibit and learning space within the State government complex, complementing State House tours and strengthening Providence as a cultural and educational destination. As our nation approaches its 250th anniversary, creating a permanent home for Rhode Island's history would be a fitting legacy project that invests in civic education, heritage tourism, and public pride.

Preserving and sharing our history is not a luxury — it is a responsibility. I respectfully urge you to support this legislation and help ensure Rhode Island's history is protected and made accessible for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service to our state.

Sincerely,



COL Ron Barnes  
Past Commander  
Pawtuxet Rangers, RIHM 1774  
Pawtuxet Village