



State of Rhode Island

Department of State | Office of the Secretary of State

Gregg M. Amore, *Secretary of State*

February 3, 2026

Honorable Marvin L. Abney, Chair
House Committee on Finance

RE: H7127 – Article 6 – General Obligation Bond Question 6 – Rhode Island State History Center

Dear Chair Abney,

This year, the United States will commemorate its semiquincentennial – the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Rhode Island had a pivotal role in the founding of our country and has continued to shape it in the 250 years since. The State Archives is full of documents that tell Rhode Island's story – including our copies of the Declaration – but they are not accessible to Rhode Islanders. The proposed Rhode Island State History Center will be a hub of historic education and civic engagement, with space for our treasures to be put on display. I write to you in strong support of the \$45 million in General Obligation bond financing to build the Rhode Island State History Center.

The House Committee on Finance has reviewed multiple proposals in past years for a purpose-built, permanent home to safely display items in the State Archives, such as the Act of Renunciation, documents from the Gaspee Commission, letters from George Washington, and our copy of the Bill of Rights. Our team utilized Rhode Island Capital Plan Funds appropriated in FY2025 to confirm an ideal site and significantly revise the proposal to reduce the size of the building – to about 24,600 square feet – and the project cost.

The most essential public functions of the previous program remain, including an exhibit gallery for permanent display of Rhode Island's founding documents, as well as space for rotating exhibits, and a multi-purpose space that will host a variety of events, functions, and educational programming. The Rhode Island State History Center also includes a limited space for collections storage, with state-of-the-art storage conditions and security to protect the most valuable documents and objects currently being held at the State Archives.

The Rhode Island State History Center will be a cultural and educational destination for Rhode Islanders. The comprehensive site study identified the lot in front of the Department of Administration as the ideal location for the State History Center. It will be a natural addition to the Capitol complex and complement the State House tour program, which served 12,468 people in 2025.

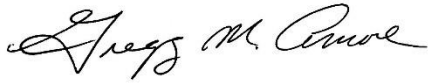
The Rhode Island State History Center would help cement Rhode Island's superiority as a cultural tourism destination – enticing new cultural tourists and encouraging those who are already here to stay longer and spend more. Additionally, an analysis by the Associated General Contractors of America estimates that the construction alone will result in over \$74 million in total in-state spending and create 428 direct, indirect, and induced jobs over two years of construction.

In 1976, when Rhode Island commemorated the bicentennial, the State invested in a legacy project – the building of the Veterans' Memorial Cemetery – to honor the contributions of Rhode Island's veterans throughout our history. This year, to commemorate the semiquincentennial, the State can invest in a legacy project – the State History Center – to honor Rhode Island's role in promoting the ideals of freedom, equality,

and independence throughout history and today. I urge your support of this bond proposal to build a State History Center where both Rhode Islanders and tourists can experience the rich history of our state.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact LeeAnn Byrne, Chief of Staff, at lbyrne@sos.ri.gov or 401-330-3192.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gregg M. Amore". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gregg" being the most prominent.

Gregg M. Amore
Secretary of State

cc: Honorable Members of the House Committee on Finance



A place to experience Rhode Island's story

Rhode Island State History Center

The Rhode Island State History Center will be a cultural and educational destination within the State government complex in Providence, Rhode Island.

A Facility Deserving of Our State's Legacy – for Students, Tourists, and all Rhode Islanders

The revised proposal prioritizes education and tourism within a smaller, cost-effective footprint – providing 3,000 square feet of exhibit space for some of Rhode Island's most treasured historic documents as well as a multi-purpose space ideal for interactive learning.

Following a comprehensive site study, the lot in front of the Department of Administration (the corner of Smith St. and Park St.) has been identified as the ideal location for the facility as a natural addition to the capitol complex and complement to the State House tour program.

Our History is Inaccessible

The current State Archives facility is located in a **leased space** on Broad Street and has **no permanent exhibit space**.


Notable treasures that **cannot be safely displayed** in the existing facility include:

- › The Gaspee Commission documents (1772);
- › Battle of Rhode Island Map, General Sullivan's Expedition (1778);
- › The Bill of Rights (1789);
- › Declaration of Independence, Stone Printing (1823); and
- › The Dorr Rebellion Map of Roads Leading to Chepachet (1842).

2026 PROPOSAL

Total Project Cost:
\$43,165,076

Total Square Footage:
24,634 sq. ft.



In 1976, the State built the Veterans' Memorial Cemetery as a legacy project honoring the Bicentennial.

As we honor America's 250th in 2026, **this can be our legacy project.**

Now is the time to ensure Rhode Island's history is preserved and displayed for generations to come.



Gregg M. Amore
Secretary of State