

# Why Act on Climate?

Testimony of Timmons Roberts to Rhode Island  
Senate's Special Legislative Commission To Study The  
Successful Implementation Of The Act On Climate

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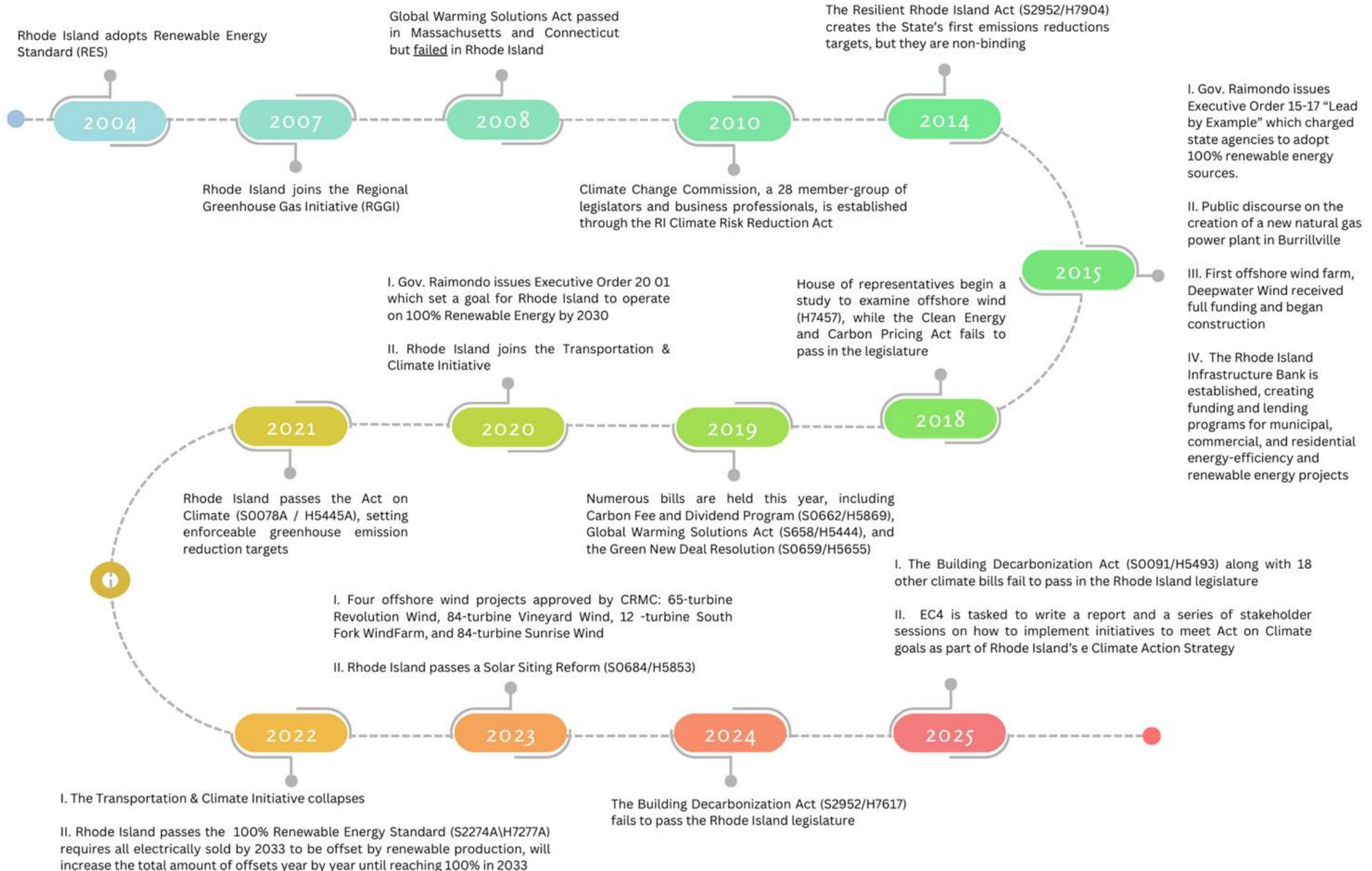
Images: *Swelling the Banks*. 2024. URI  
Magazine (Stormtools project)



# Takeaways

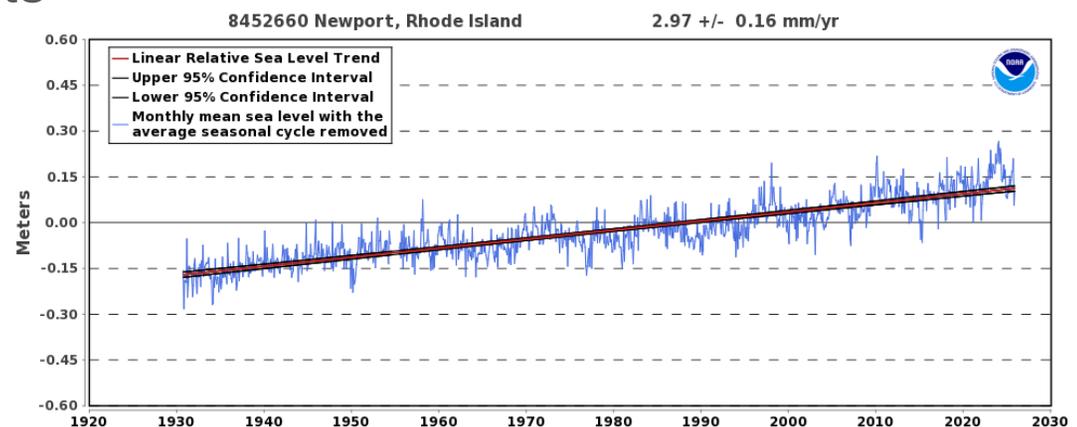
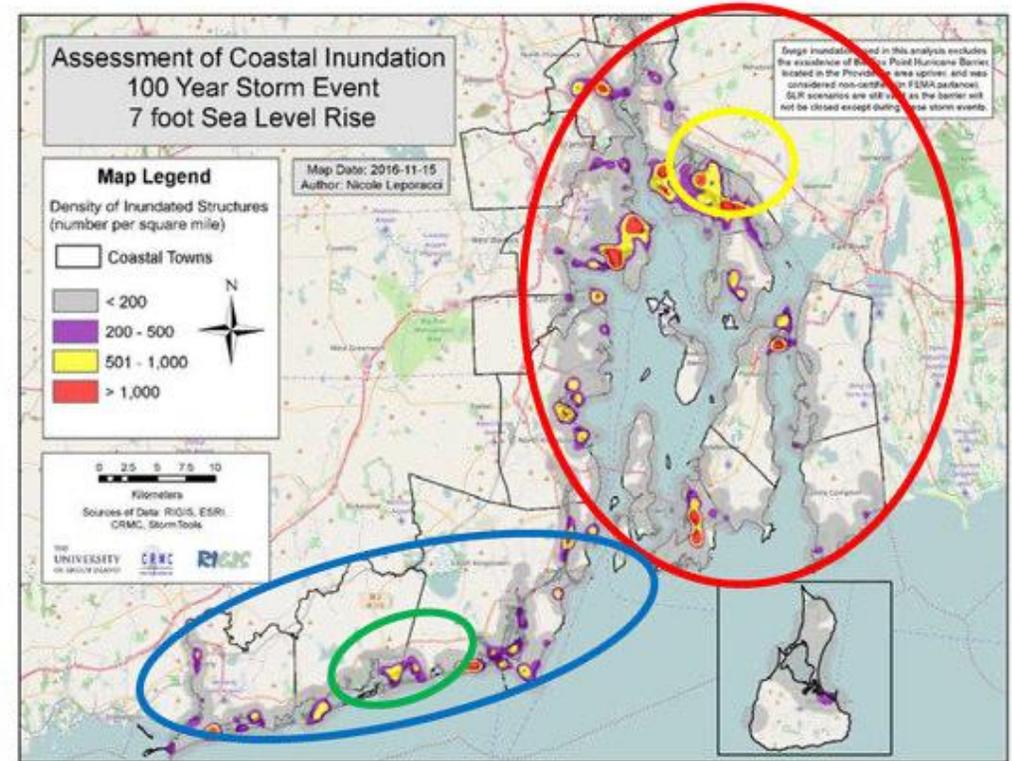
1. Climate change is real, **Rhode Island is a national leader**, *and* we are vulnerable to damages
  - a. Despite limitations, the 2025 Climate Action Strategy shows that renewable energy and efficiency are critical
  
1. The **2026 draft budget proposal is a surrender** to a national special-interests influence campaign
  - a. It is a surrender of our *leadership*,
  - b. On Act on Climate *compliance*
  - c. It is a surrender of *benefits* to the state of acting
  
1. **A clean, affordable energy future is within reach**
  - a. The legislature has a choice: listen to the naysayers and continue our dependence on imported fuel, continued local health impacts, and climate damages, or lead RI to an affordable clean energy future

# The long road to meaningful climate policy in RI



# Why did RI bother to Act on Climate?

1. Climate change is real, it's happening now, it's human caused, it's bad, we can make a difference
2. Act on Climate targets were based on best science--to avoid worst impacts, need to get to net zero emissions by 2050
3. Acting has benefits, here, now: health, jobs, economic development
4. Keep money in-state (RI exports \$3 billion / year on fossil fuels)
5. Stability in energy prices, renewables often cheaper
6. AoC passed without IRA



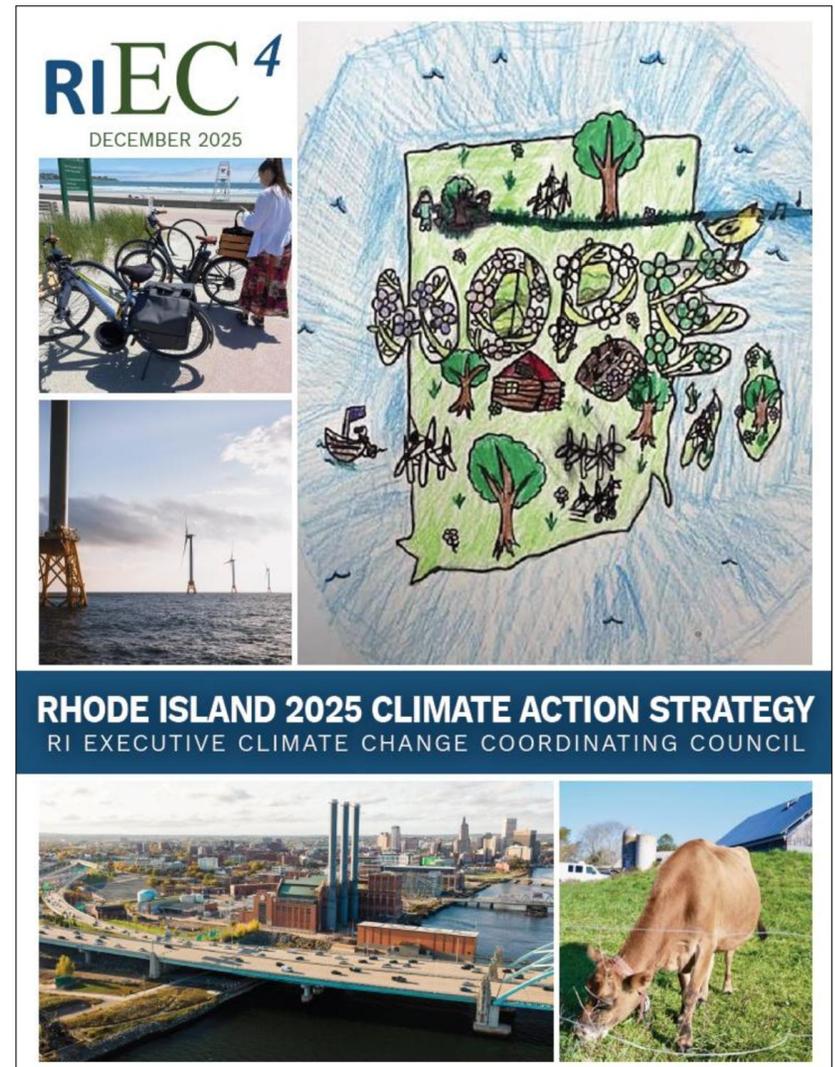
# The 2025 Climate Action Strategy was needed but had key modeling weaknesses, including:

1. It relied on **Advanced Clean Cars II and Adv Clean Trucks, both in court**

STAB Comment: “The Climate Strategy places a substantial, risky emphasis on ACCII & ACT policies to decarbonize the transportation sector and achieve the 2030 Act on Climate mandate”

1. It failed to explore the capacity of other policies to reduce transit emissions

STAB Comment: “If modeled without arbitrary budget limits, [other transportation] strategies could play an important role as supplements or alternatives to ACCII & ACT, especially given the uncertainties [with ACCII & ACT implementation]”



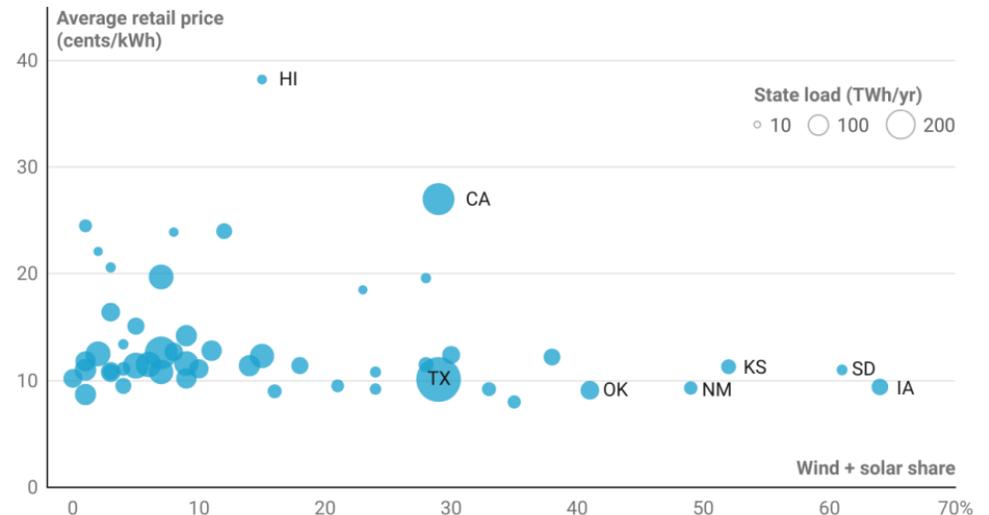
# New Proposed Budget is a surrender

1. Proposed rollback of 100% Renewables from 2033 to 2050 makes all the models in CAS obsolete
  - a. Some renewables, including offshore wind, can provide electricity at lowest cost: (Revolution Wind 9.6 cents/kwh; marginal gas 14.6 c/kwh)
  - b. RI's compliance strategy relies heavily on buying RECs, which passes up investing in additional low-cost generation

**STAB Comment: "In-state energy efficiency and distributed generation...have the potential to save customers money, generate local economic benefits...reduce emissions...[and] effectively reduce RI's RES compliance cost"**

## Average State-Level Electricity Price in 2024 vs. Share of Total in-State Generation from Utility-Scale Wind and Solar

Retail electricity price in cents/kWh in 2024\$. Utility-scale wind+solar share in 2024 only considers in-state generation, ignoring inter-state trade in electricity.



### 3. Slashing energy efficiency funds is self-defeating

#### STAB Comments:

“reduction in Rhode Island’s energy efficiency budget...poses a material risk to Act on Climate compliance”

“Energy efficiency is a foundational decarbonization resource”



EE provides immediate  
quality of life benefits.

***The Cheapest Energy  
is Energy You Don't  
Use***

## 4. The other options are terrible

- **Nuclear?** Nuclear has historically been extremely expensive, and SMRs (Small Modular Reactors) are a new technology that has not been proven at scale (only a handful of projects exist to date).  
Siting? Waste? Risks?
- **More gas power plants?** Pipeline capacity in NE is VERY limited. Turbine supply chain has a multi-year backlog. Gas prices are extremely volatile, have driven recent cost increases.

**Wind, solar, and storage** are proven, safe technologies that are already economically competitive, and expected to get dramatically cheaper moving forward.

For the transition, consider keeping oil peaker plants online.

# Climate Delay Discourse has come to Rhode Island



## Discourses of climate delay

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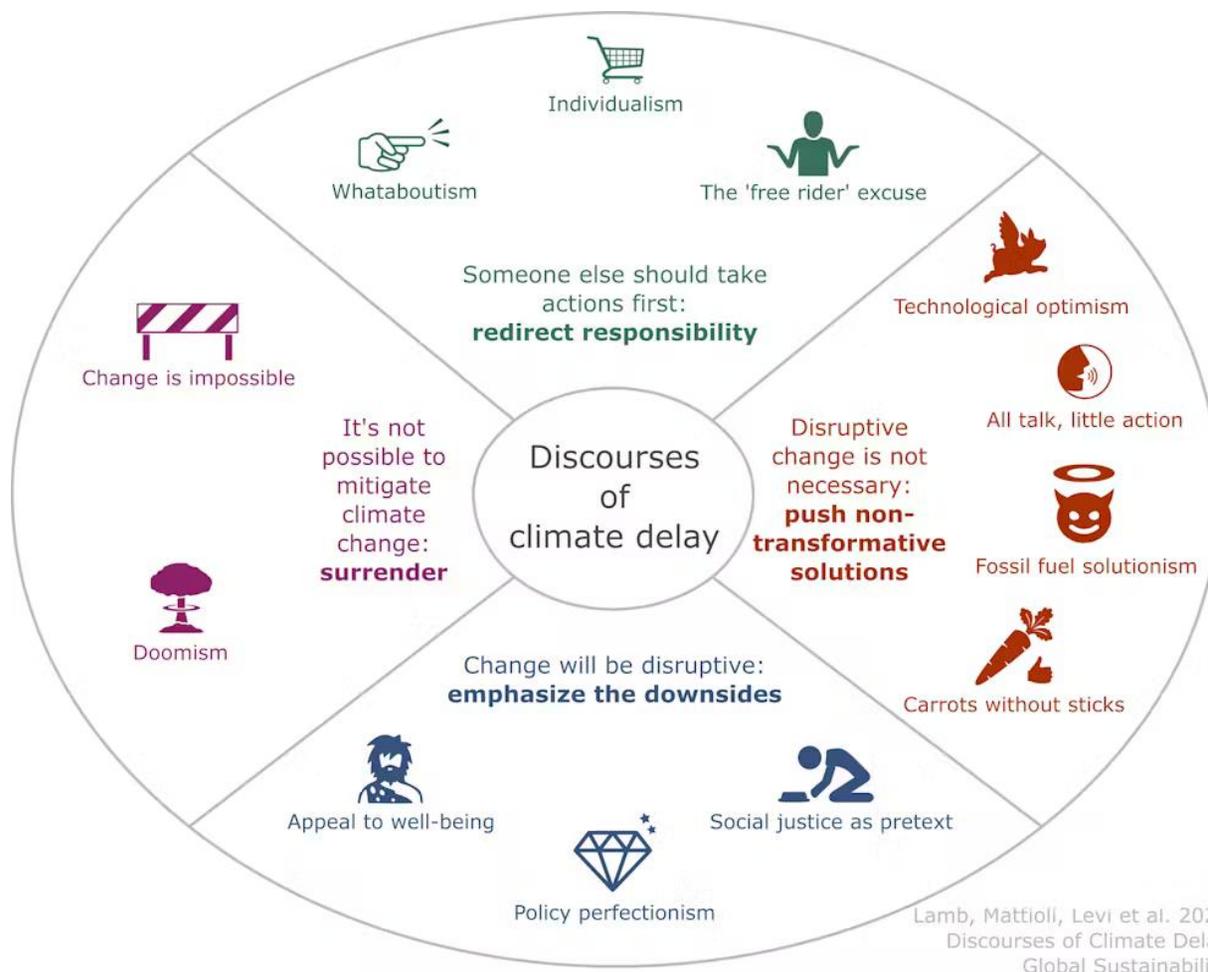
William F. Lamb , Giulio Mattioli, Sebastian Levi, J. Timmons Roberts, Stuart Capstick, Felix Creutzig , Jan C. Minx, Finn Müller-Hansen, Trevor Culhane and Julia K. Steinberger

Article

Figures

Supplementary materials

Metrics



# Who's driving efforts to gut RI's climate effort?

***Climate and Development Lab research has shown that Rhode Island Energy and local and national business lobbies have routinely opposed past legislative efforts to support clean, affordable energy for all our residents.***

Rhode Island Energy, owned by Pennsylvania Power and Light (PPL), spent the most on lobbying (in the years it has been active) and was the most active opponent of environmental groups on climate and energy bills in our study period.

***They are seeking to blame rising rates on energy efficiency and renewable energy programs, which are 5% of typical bills, and have not risen markedly***

**..Gas Prices have driven rising electricity costs in New England in the past five years**

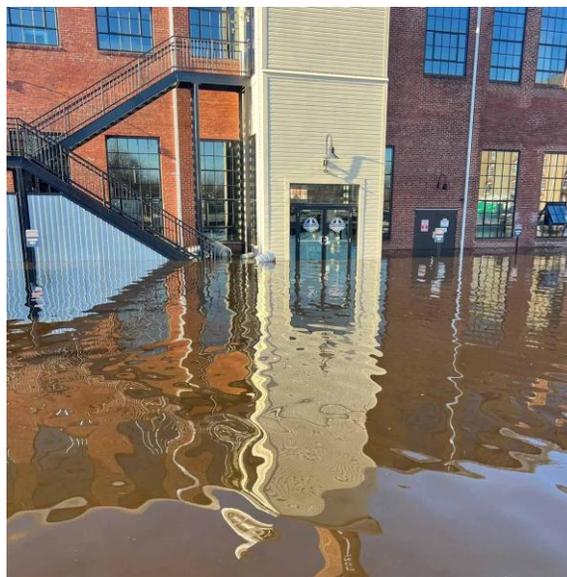
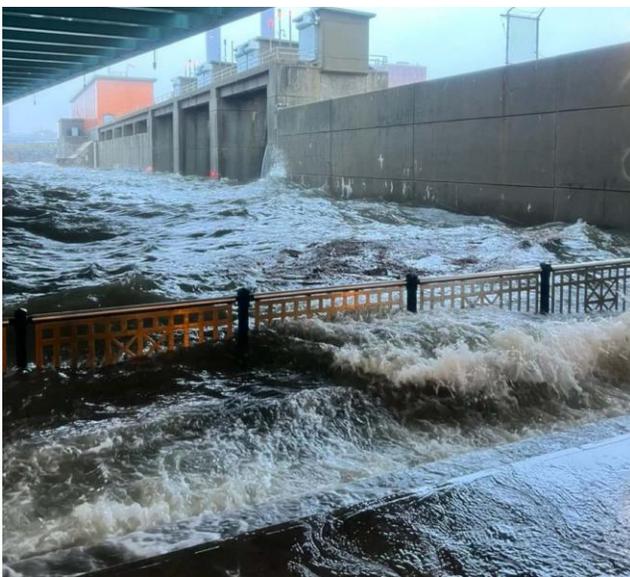
These groups have lobbied and testified against ECRI/CARI priority legislation. See: *CDL 2026. Who's Obstructing Action in the Rhode Island Legislature.*

<https://www.climatedevlab.brown.edu/post/who-s-obstructing-climate-action-in-the-rhode-island-legislature>



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