



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND JUDICIARY

SUPREME COURT  
OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL

Licht Judicial Complex  
250 Benefit Street  
Providence, RI 02903

March 10, 2026

**Via Electronic Mail (slegislation@rilegislature.gov)**

Chairman Robert Britto  
Senate Committee on Commerce  
Rhode Island State House  
Room 212  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

**RE: Senate Bill #2761: An Act Relating to Corporations, Associations and Partnerships – Rhode Island Business Corporation Act – The Rhode Island Business Climate Reform Act**

Dear Chairman Britto:

I write on behalf of the Rhode Island Judiciary to express the Judiciary’s significant concerns regarding Senate Bill # 2761, scheduled to be heard this evening before the Senate Committee on Commerce. If enacted, § 8-2-42 of this proposed legislation, entitled “Court of chancery,” would create a new court of chancery within the “superior court but acting as a separate court” that would consist of “five (5) chancellors” one of whom “shall be the chief chancellor.” The remaining “chancellors” would be “selected and appointed in the same manner as magistrates of the superior court” and appointed for a term of “ten (10) years.” Additionally, § 8-2-41 of this legislation, entitled “Complex commercial litigation calendar, would create a new complex commercial litigation calendar “for the administration and determination of complex commercial litigation matters.”

The implementation of either the proposed court or chancery or the complex commercial litigation calendar, let alone both, would levy a significant financial, staffing, facility, and technological burden on the Judiciary, none of which is compensated for within the confines of this legislation. First, the creation of the court of chancery would require the Judiciary to take on five (5) new judicial salaries for the one (1) Chief Chancellor and four (4) chancellors. These salaries would presumably be equivalent to at least those of a Chief Magistrate and four additional magistrates, whose salaries and benefit packages would total approximately 1.5 million dollars the first year of implementation and increase thereafter. Please see the included fiscal impact statement. Second, each chancellor would require their own court staff consisting, at a minimum, of a courtroom clerk, a stenographer or electronic reporter, and a sheriff. Estimated salary and benefit compensation for these employees would amount to approximately 2 million dollars in the first year.

Additionally, considering the proposed legislation envisions the court of chancery “acting as a separate court” within the Superior Court, it is likely that additional support staff will also be required, such as a Court Administrator, a Chief Clerk, data entry specialists, and others. These salaries would also need to be accounted for. Third, currently there is inadequate facility space within the unified judicial system to house five (5) new chancellors and their myriad associated staff in their own courtrooms, chambers, and offices, so a detailed analysis of the build out and operating costs for additional courtroom and administrative space would also need to be performed before the court of chancery could be implemented.

Finally, the Judiciary’s current case management, electronic filing, public access, and internal network and email systems, sized for one (1) Supreme and five (5) lower courts, would need to be expanded to accommodate the proposed court of chancery. It is currently unknown whether such expansion could be accomplished, and at what cost.

Furthermore, § 8-2-41 of this legislation, entitled “Complex commercial litigation calendar,” would also create “a separate calendar for the administration and determination of complex litigation matters” within the Superior Court. Concerns similar to those raised with respect to the proposed court of chancery abound here as well. A new FTE would be required for the judicial officer overseeing this proposed calendar, as well as additional FTEs for a courtroom clerk, a stenographer or an electronic court reporter, a sheriff, and, potentially, support staff. Increased funding would be needed to pay these new salaries. Build out of additional space for the new judicial officer overseeing the calendar may also be needed.

In total, this proposed legislation, at a minimum, would require the following new FTEs:

- 1 Judge
- 1 Chief Chancellor (or Chief Magistrate)
- 4 Chancellors (or Magistrates)
- 6 clerks
- 6 Stenographers/ECR Reporters
- 6 Sheriffs (or Security)

Based on the attached fiscal impact statement, a conservative estimate of the associated salaries would amount to millions of dollars in the first year if this legislation is passed. Additional estimates for other costs, including support staff salaries, facility build outs, and technological needs, may be generated when more concrete details are provided.

Thank you for the opportunity to express the Judiciary’s serious concerns on this bill. Should this bill move forward, the Judiciary requests that its budget be increased to include the additional expenses outlined in this written testimony and the attached fiscal impact statement. The new funds would be needed to accommodate the additional salaries and other costs associated with implementing the proposed court of chancery and/or complex commercial litigation calendar. Further, an additional request for financial funds would be needed for the creation of new space to house the proposed court of chancery and, potentially, the judicial officer overseeing the proposed complex commercial litigation calendar as well.

Sincerely,

*Chrisanne Wyrzykowski*

Chrisanne Wyrzykowski  
General Counsel  
Rhode Island Supreme Court



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TO: Darlene Walsh, Director of Finance & Budget; Chrisanne Wyrzykowski, Deputy General Counsel

FROM: Edward J Cooney, Jr., Executive Director

RE: 2026-S 2761

DATE: March 10, 2026

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The proposed legislation would create an additional calendar in Superior Court entitled the “Complex Commercial Litigation Calendar” to exclusively hear and decide all eligible complex commercial litigation matters. To be considered a complex commercial litigation calendar a claim asserted by either party or a declaratory judgment must be more than \$1.0 million. This excludes any cases that contain a claim of personal, physical or mental injury; mortgage foreclosure actions; mechanics lien actions; condemnation proceedings or any case where the party to the case is an individual acting primarily for personal, family or household purposes or where the agreement relates to an individual or collective contract agreements.

The proposed legislation also creates and establishes within the Superior Court, but as a separate Court a Court of Chancery. This Court will act independently of the Superior Court. The Court of Chancery will consist of 5 Chancellors and the powers may be exercised in Chambers and will sit without juries. The Court of Chancery will hear disputed in equity only. These duties may include fiduciary duty, mediation and arbitration, governance, appraisal, books-and records inspection demands.

The proposed legislation also creates the Rhode Island Rapid Arbitration Act to allow for Rhode Island business, corporate and nonprofit entities a method to resolve disputes in a timely manner. This legislation would limit the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court to hear appeals of:

- 1) The appointment of an arbitrator under RIGL 9-36-5
- 2) Determination of the Arbitrator’s fees under RIGL 9-36-6(b)
- 3) Issuance or denial of an injunction in arbitration under
- 4) To grant or deny an order enforcing a subpoena issued under RIGL 9-36-7

The proposed legislation would take effect upon passage.

**Fiscal Impact**

The passage of this legislation will a “Commercial Litigation Calendar” in the Rhode Island Superior Court. This would require the appointment of 1 Associate Justice, 1 Deputy Clerk 1, a Court Stenographer and a Deputy Sheriff assigned to the Courtroom. The figures below are reflective of a Deputy Clerk position hired at a minimum of a grade 24, a Deputy Sheriff at a grade 24, a stenographer at a paygrade 28 and Associate Justice hired at a Judicial Pay Grade 5. The projections for the next four fiscal year period are based off the current UA and J schedules, the FY 2027 planning values and the 3.0 percent cost of living adjustment set to

take place July 1, 2026. Beyond what was previously mentioned, the figures over the next four fiscal years period do not take into consideration any additional contractual cost of living adjustments that may occur.

<b>Commercial Litigation Calendar - Fiscal Impact</b>				
<b>1 Associate Justice - Pay Grade 5 8800J</b>				
	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>
<b>Salary</b>	\$ 213,322.79	\$ 216,523.51	\$ 219,770.59	\$ 223,065.56
<b>Benefits</b>	\$ 79,785.35	\$ 80,486.95	\$ 81,198.71	\$ 81,920.97
<b>Total Annual Cost</b>	<b>\$ 293,108.14</b>	<b>\$ 297,010.46</b>	<b>\$ 300,969.30</b>	<b>\$ 304,986.52</b>
<b>Deputy Sheriff Pay Grade 24 600 UA</b>				
	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>
<b>Salary</b>	\$ 66,693.02	\$ 68,809.15	\$ 71,282.18	\$ 72,981.68
<b>Benefits</b>	\$ 58,355.01	\$ 59,158.72	\$ 60,097.97	\$ 60,743.44
<b>Total Annual Cost</b>	<b>\$ 125,048.02</b>	<b>\$ 127,967.87</b>	<b>\$ 131,380.15</b>	<b>\$ 133,725.12</b>
<b>Deputy Clerk 1- Pay Grade 24 4400 UA</b>				
	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>
<b>Salary</b>	\$ 67,060.21	\$ 69,396.77	\$ 71,677.70	\$ 74,722.38
<b>Benefits</b>	\$ 51,213.00	\$ 52,245.49	\$ 53,253.21	\$ 54,598.35
<b>Total Annual Cost</b>	<b>\$ 118,273.21</b>	<b>\$ 121,642.26</b>	<b>\$ 124,930.91</b>	<b>\$ 129,320.73</b>
<b>Stenographer - Pay Grade 28 100 UA</b>				
	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>
<b>Salary</b>	\$ 80,888.48	\$ 83,812.65	\$ 87,583.48	\$ 89,861.32
<b>Benefits</b>	\$ 57,322.53	\$ 58,614.43	\$ 60,280.38	\$ 61,286.73
<b>Total Annual Cost</b>	<b>\$ 138,211.00</b>	<b>\$ 142,427.07</b>	<b>\$ 147,863.85</b>	<b>\$ 151,148.05</b>
<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>\$ 674,640.37</b>	<b>\$ 689,047.66</b>	<b>\$ 705,144.21</b>	<b>\$ 719,180.43</b>

The proposed legislation also creates and establishes within the Superior Court, but as a separate Court a Court of Chancery. This Court will act independently of the Superior Court. The Court of Chancery will consist of 5 Chancellors, all of whom are to be appointed in the same fashion as Magistrates and appointed to 10 year terms. One of the five Chancellors will be selected to serve as the Chief Chancellor.

The creation of the Court of Chancery would require the appointment of 4.0 Chief Chancellor, 4.0 Chancellors, 4.0 Deputy Clerk 1, 4.0 Court Stenographers and 4.0 Deputy Sheriffs assigned to the Courtrooms. The figures below are reflective of 4.0 Deputy Clerk position hired at a minimum of a grade 24, 4.0 Deputy Sheriff at a grade 24, 4.0 stenographers at a paygrade 28 and 4.0 Chancellors hired at a Judicial paygrade 3 and a Chief Chancellor hired at a Judicial pay grade 5. The projections for the next four fiscal year period are based off the current UA and J schedules, the FY 2027 planning values and the 3.0 percent cost of living adjustment set to take place July 1, 2026. Beyond what was previously mentioned, the figures over the next four fiscal years period do not take into consideration any additional contractual cost of living adjustments that may occur.

<b>5.0 Deputy Sheriffs Pay Grade 24 600 UA</b>				
	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>
<b>Salary</b>	\$ 333,465.08	\$ 344,045.75	\$ 356,410.90	\$ 364,908.40
<b>Benefits</b>	\$ 291,775.04	\$ 295,793.58	\$ 300,489.86	\$ 303,717.21
<b>Total Annual Cost</b>	<b>\$ 625,240.11</b>	<b>\$ 639,839.33</b>	<b>\$ 656,900.76</b>	<b>\$ 668,625.61</b>
<b>5.0 Deputy Clerk 1- Pay Grade 24 4400 UA</b>				
	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>
<b>Salary</b>	\$ 335,301.05	\$ 346,983.83	\$ 358,388.50	\$ 373,611.90
<b>Benefits</b>	\$ 256,065.00	\$ 261,227.45	\$ 266,266.04	\$ 272,991.74
<b>Total Annual Cost</b>	<b>\$ 591,366.05</b>	<b>\$ 608,211.28</b>	<b>\$ 624,654.54</b>	<b>\$ 646,603.64</b>
<b>5.0 Stenographer - Pay Grade 28 100 UA</b>				
	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>
<b>Salary</b>	\$ 404,442.38	\$ 419,063.23	\$ 437,917.38	\$ 449,306.60
<b>Benefits</b>	\$ 286,612.64	\$ 293,072.13	\$ 301,401.90	\$ 306,433.66
<b>Total Annual Cost</b>	<b>\$ 691,055.02</b>	<b>\$ 712,135.36</b>	<b>\$ 739,319.27</b>	<b>\$ 755,740.26</b>
<b>4.0 General Magistrate - Pay Grade 03 8800J</b>				
	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>
<b>Salary</b>	\$ 800,052.50	\$ 812,049.94	\$ 824,228.66	\$ 836,594.84
<b>Benefits</b>	\$ 435,959.94	\$ 440,516.57	\$ 445,142.05	\$ 449,838.72
<b>Total Annual Cost</b>	<b>\$ 1,236,012.44</b>	<b>\$ 1,252,566.51</b>	<b>\$ 1,269,370.71</b>	<b>\$ 1,286,433.56</b>
<b>1.0 Chief Magistrate - Pay Grade 05 8800 J</b>				
	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>
<b>Salary</b>	\$ 213,322.79	\$ 216,523.51	\$ 219,770.59	\$ 223,065.56
<b>Benefits</b>	\$ 114,044.99	\$ 115,260.63	\$ 116,493.87	\$ 117,745.30
<b>Total Annual Cost</b>	<b>\$ 327,367.78</b>	<b>\$ 331,784.14</b>	<b>\$ 336,264.45</b>	<b>\$ 340,810.85</b>
<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>\$ 3,471,041.40</b>	<b>\$ 3,544,536.61</b>	<b>\$ 3,626,509.73</b>	<b>\$ 3,698,213.92</b>

The Judiciary's FTE cap will need to be raised by an additional 18.0 FTE and the Department of Public Safety's will need to be raised by an additional 5.0 in the Division of Sheriffs.

There will be additional operational expenditures that are currently undeterminable at this time. Included in this would be finding space to house these additional courtrooms. To support the Court of Chancery, there may be additional staffing requirements, including but not limited to Administrators and additional support professionals. Complete build out of the Court, based upon its needs, may resemble the Rhode Island Traffic Tribunal or the Workers Compensation Court.

Included in this legislation is additional revenue as a tax imposed to every corporation, joint stock company, limited liability company, partnership, statutory trust qualified to do business in the State of Rhode Island. The amount of revenue raised by these taxes is indeterminable at this point time.

The total personnel fiscal impact of this legislation for the State of Rhode Island is shown in the table below.

<b>Total Personnel Expenses</b>				
	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>
<b>Salary</b>	\$ 2,299,906.57	\$ 2,355,189.76	\$ 2,416,486.61	\$ 2,470,552.85
<b>Benefits</b>	\$ 1,464,242.96	\$ 1,486,357.31	\$ 1,510,992.42	\$ 1,532,647.59
<b>Total Annual Cost</b>	<b>\$ 4,438,789.91</b>	<b>\$4,530,594.73</b>	<b>\$4,632,623.24</b>	<b>\$ 4,722,380.87</b>