

VICTORIA
GU
State Senate
— **District 38** —

April Updates & Fundraiser

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

After so much rain, I'm happy to wish everyone a happy and (somewhat) sunny Spring Break! We're more than halfway through our legislative session for 2024, and we've been hard at work building momentum and support for a lot of major bills that matter for our district (Act on Coasts, CRMC Reform, Accessory Dwelling Units, package of Shoreline Access Bills, and much more).

Powerful Hearing on CRMC Reform

I'm so grateful to see passionate folks come from all over the state to testify on these issues. For instance, on March 29th, environmentalists, fishermen & aquaculture, and concerned citizens (from as far away as Westerly, Tiverton, and Jamestown) all showed up to testify in support of reforming Rhode Island's coastal regulatory body - the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC). Attorney General Peter Neronha is sponsoring the bill along with myself and Representative Terri Cortvriend. For the five-minute summary, click on the button below. For the full hearing, watch Capitol TV here: <https://capitolvri.cablecast.tv/show/9061?site=1>

Listen to ThePublicsRadio coverage of CRMC reform



April 24, 2024 Fundraiser

Time/Date: Wednesday April 24th, 6-8pm

Location: Asia Grille, 140 Hillside Rd, Cranston, RI

The next election in 2024 is coming quickly, and we need your support! Please join us for dinner and conversation at Asia Grille (private dining room) at 140 Hillside Rd, Cranston on Wed April 24th, 2024, 6-8pm. Get your ticket today at: victoria4ri.com/apr24

Here's a few highlights of what we've done so far in 2023-2024, in numbers:

- Passed the shoreline access bill, passed a bill for more energy-efficient buildings, passed a bill to educate consumers on gift card scams, secured \$5.1 million (half of this from a federal funding match) to raise Medicaid reimbursement rates in order to sustain our ambulance services, and secured local grants for nonprofits in District 38
- **Spoke at 8 town halls:** Got community feedback and hosted in-depth discussions on everything from shoreline access, climate resiliency, affordable housing, commuter rail, mental health, and education/workforce development
- **15 newsletters** to keep our community in the loop about what's happening at the State House
- Personally answered **hundreds** of constituent emails and support requests



The 2024 election is
around the corner!
Join us for a fundraiser
in support of

**VICTORIA GU
RI STATE
SENATOR
DISTRICT 38**

**WED APRIL 24, 2024
6-8PM**

**ASIA GRILLE
(PRIVATE DINING ROOM)
140 HILLSIDE RD
CRANSTON, RI**

Suggested Donation
\$40 Young Professional
\$100 Supporter
\$250 Champion

victoria4ri.com/apr24

RI Senate Legislative Updates

- On April 9th, the RI Senate approved [legislation](#) sponsored by Sen. Melissa A. Murray to limit insured patients' copays for supplies and equipment used to treat diabetes to \$25 for a 30-day supply. The bill now awaits action in the House Health & Human Services committee.
- On March 19th, the RI Senate passed the [Safe Storage of Firearms bill](#), and it is now awaiting action in the House. I had a lot of thoughts on the bill and the [gaps in the current laws](#) highlighted by SK Council Member Patti Alley because of the tragic loss of her sister. To keep it short, I will quote Senate Majority Leader Ryan Pearson: "Safe storage is a safety precaution that responsible gun owners already take. It lowers the risk of injury for children and teens, and helps prevent suicides and gun thefts."
- In 2023, the RI legislature called for the General Treasurer to convene a Pension Advisory Working Group. Over the course of six televised public hearings, the Working Group considered voluminous written and oral testimony from stakeholders and experts concerning the potential impacts and unintended consequences of RIRSA, as well as options that could be considered to improve the state pension system. On February 26th, the Group released the final Report, which you may find [here](#). There are many related bills put forward in the House and Senate this year, and I co-sponsored a bill to fund, at least for the upcoming year, a 2% cost-of-living increase in public pension benefits (though I wish it were more, the focus right now is on getting the pension system to a point where it is 80% funded).



SHORELINE ACCESS BILLS 2024

S-2185	Disclose shoreline access law and other public access conditions to buyers of oceanfront property
S-2641	Option to preserve abandoned roads as walking, biking trails
S-2634	Allow historic footpaths to be designated as rights-of-way

Reminder To Send In Testimony For Shoreline Access Bills

I'm glad to work with State Representative Terri Cortvriend to build on the success of the shoreline access legislation last year. This year, we're focusing more on rights-of-ways. These bills will give CRMC and towns some tools to preserve access not just to the shoreline, but also to historic trails and recreational sites.

Read more about the bills here: <https://www.providencejournal.com/story/news/politics/2024/03/05/how-shoreline-access-rights-could-change-this-year-in-ri/72856498007/>

We were partly inspired by this ProJo article a few years back: <https://www.providencejournal.com/story/news/local/2022/02/25/rhode-island-public-access-historical-paths-trails/6703292001/>

What you can do: We need strong testimony to keep momentum going on shoreline access bills! You can:

- Use this form to contact your state representatives and senators: <https://actionnetwork.org/letters/support-shoreline-access-bills-s-2641-s-2634-s-2185/>
- Send Senate testimony to slegislation@rilegislature.gov and include the bill number in the subject line
- Email me if you'd like to testify in person; we can send you updates when the hearings are scheduled.

Take Action for Shoreline Access Bills

Past Meetings / Events



Lt Governor Matos and Secretary Liz Tanner visit Westerly

Meeting focused on the economic benefits of commuter rail and regional mobility

Thank you Lieutenant Governor Sabina Matos and Secretary of Commerce Elizabeth Tanner for visiting Westerly to discuss the economic benefits of extending commuter rail from Southern Connecticut to Westerly and the rest of Rhode Island

Thank you Lieutenant Governor Sabina Matos and Secretary of Commerce Elizabeth Tanner for visiting Westerly to discuss the economic benefits of extending commuter rail from Southern Connecticut to Westerly and the rest of Rhode Island (on the existing Amtrak route). One of Governor Dan McKee's stated objectives is to raise Rhode Islander's incomes, and the meeting emphasized that enhancing residents' mobility would do just that. Improving rail affordability and frequency would make education and jobs accessible to more people in Rhode Island. Likewise, commuter rail can enable employers desperate to fill workforce shortages to cast a wider net to access a broader, regional talent base.

Pictured: Lisa Konicki (Ocean Community Chamber of Commerce), Doug Brockway (Chair, Westerly Economic Development Commission), Alex Berardo, Bill Aiello (Town Council President), Sabina Matos (Lieutenant Governor), Victoria Gu (State Senator), Elizabeth Tanner (Secretary of Commerce)



Powerful Testimony for the Blue Envelope Program

Thank you to the students from Westerly High School who approached me to introduce the Blue Envelope bill and came up to testify at the State House! Thanks to the teachers and parents for supporting them and to CT State Rep Greg Howard for coming all the way from Hartford, CT to testify on how the program is working in CT.

The Blue Envelope program has spread from CT to NJ and other parts of the country, to promote better communication and understanding between police officers and drivers with autism. We're hoping to bring it to Rhode Island



National Library Week: Fair Prices for E-books/Audiobooks and Freedom to Read

Last week was #NationalLibraryWeek! At the urging of our local libraries, my colleagues and I presented a number of bills in Senate Education committee this week including:

[S-2514](#) - I'm sponsoring this bill to require fair contracts and prices for e-books and audiobooks sold to libraries. Currently publishers are price-gouging libraries, making them pay up to 9x the retail price for an e-book for a limited number of uses before they have to buy it again at the inflated price.

I'm cosponsoring with Senator Mark McKenney: [S-2281 Freedom to Read](#) - Encourages and protects the freedom of public libraries to acquire materials without limitations and prohibits materials being removed from public libraries due to partisan or doctrinal disapproval

Libraries are the hub of many communities- a place where anyone regardless of background has free access to knowledge and community programs. Glad to support our local libraries this week and every week.

Also pictures: RI State Senator Mark McKenney



Seal Release at Blue Shutters Beach

I look forward to Mystic Aquarium's seal rehabilitation & release every year at Blue Shutters Beach in Charlestown. There has been a huge increase in the number of seals in Narragansett Bay & Block Island, signaling that wildlife protections are helping the population get back to its historic levels. There are plenty of hazards at sea, though. Here's what they said about the rescued seals:

"Nugget"

Nugget is a yearling male harp seal who stranded at Napatree Conservation Area in Westerly, RI. The seal was minimally responsive and dehydrated and admitted to Mystic Aquarium's Animal Rescue Clinic on February 4, 2024. Now weighing around 31kg, Nugget has recovered well in rehabilitation and is ready for release!

"Shamrock"

Shamrock is a juvenile female harbor seal who was initially reported stranded in Essex, MA. Although she was active initially, the seal had a large, open wound on her left flank. The seal was rescued on December 15, 2023 and was transferred to Mystic Aquarium's Animal Rescue Clinic. Shamrock's wound has healed and she is now ready for release!



Speaking with the Rotary Club of Westerly

Thank you to the The Rotary Club of Westerly for inviting me back to speak and give an update on the past year at the State House! Always great to hear issues and ideas from the community, ranging from placing bike racks at shoreline rights-of-ways to financial security for retirees



URI Day at the State House

It was URI day at the State House on March 27th, and it was packed! We learn so much about environmental protection from URI's work on geosciences, oceanography and other coastal issues: I saw a demonstration on how to monitor and minimize well water pollution if an underwater storage tank / oil tank is suspected of leaking into the soil.

Also pictured: RI State Senator Hanna Gallo



YMCA Kickoff Breakfast

Thank you to the YMCA for their work to fundraise and provide scholarship opportunities for Rhode Island and Connecticut families and children to access their facilities and community programs. It's life changing for a lot of families to be able to send their kids to after school programs and youth sports.



Reading Week at Dunns Corner Elementary

It was Reading Week again at Dunns Corners! I read the book "Making a Splash" to a great group of 4th graders. As an avid reader growing up, I'm glad to have these events that get kids excited to read.

Upcoming Local Events / Places I'll Be

- **Sat Apr 20th 10am - 2pm:** Co-hosted by Charlestown & Richmond Democratic Town Committees: Coffee and Conversation @ Higher Grounds Community Coffeehouse (39 Kingstown Rd, Richmond, RI), followed by a Community Cleanup
- **Mon Apr 22nd 6-8pm at CCRI Warwick Campus:** RI Senate Education Summit. Attendees are asked to register at this link: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2024-ri-senate-education-summit-tickets-862978290297?aff=oddtcreator>
- **Tues Apr 23rd 6-8pm:** Westerly Affordable Housing committee presenting final findings, and they will host a public workshop (agenda not posted yet)
- **Mon May 6th 9am on WBLQ Radio Station:** My biweekly conversation with Frank Prosnitz to update folks on what's happening at the State House
- **Sat Jun 1st 12-3pm:** PRIDE in the Park (Wilcox Park)
- **Commission Meetings:** I'll continue visiting some local town commissions to keep up to date with what they're planning and share any relevant state resources. If you'd like me to join a meeting, please reach out!

Applications for Disaster Assistance

Homeowners (who are also full-time residents) across Rhode Island, including inland areas, who sustained damage during the December/January storms can apply now through May 20th, 2024. Our Congress members were instrumental in getting this disaster declaration. More information to come, including the federal funds that are available for “hazard mitigation” in the future (if the state comes up with matching funds). Read the press release here: <https://www.fema.gov/press-release/20240321/president-joseph-r-biden-jr-approves-major-disaster-declaration-rhode-island>

There are now several pop-up FEMA centers in Rhode Island to assist homeowners and businesses in applying for relief, including at Curtis Corner Middle School and a new location TBD for the Misquamicut area.

Apply Now

Friends of Victoria Gu, PO Box 116, Charlestown, RI 02813, United States, 4013880696

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