

VICTORIA GU

State Senate — District 38 —

May Updates

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

After some late nights and hearing from many members of the public in the three committees I serve on, we are close to wrapping up the initial hearings for all our bills, and we're in the final sprint to work out the final details or negotiations for bills that we want to get passed.

I wanted to highlight that **today is the deadline to register for disaster relief (see the recap of our April 29th town hall below). Please direct questions to victoria4ri@gmail.com, sen-gu@rilegislature.gov, or 401-388-0696**

Visit DisasterAssistance.Gov





Recap: April 29th Climate Resiliency Town Hall

Thanks so much to the RI Emergency Management Agency (RI EMA), RI CRMC, FEMA, and U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) for discussing climate resiliency efforts with us and supporting Rhode Islanders and businesses who were impacted by the Dec/Jan storms. Someone at our town hall said that FEMA staff knocked on doors in her neighborhood, and she found the application process to be quick and straightforward. The audience posed some great questions. Some takeaways were:

- For each town, make sure your hazard mitigation plan is up-to-date in order to be eligible for disaster relief. Each town should also talk to RI EMA about applying for federal funding for projects identified in their hazard mitigation plan (there is a local funding match requirement as well). Residents should be talking to their town councilors to let them know that climate resiliency and proactive planning is important to them.
- For small business owners and most homeowners after a disaster declaration, you can apply to the Small Business Administration for low-interest mitigation loans in order to make your structure/infrastructure stronger and more resilient to future storms.

The deadline to register for disaster relief from the Dec 2023/Jan 2024 storms is this Monday May 20th (go to DisasterAssistance.gov). More details at the bottom of the newsletter.

Watch the recording of the Apr 29th town hall



SENATOR LINDA UJIFUSA & SENATOR VICTORIA GU

CORDIALLY INVITE YOU TO CELEBRATE

ASIAN AMERICAN

— AND —

PACIFIC ISLANDER

Heritage
MONTH

MAY 23, 2024

2:30-4:00 PM

**RHODE ISLAND STATE HOUSE
GOVERNOR'S ROOM**

82 SMITH STREET, PROVIDENCE, RI 02903

RI Senate Legislative Updates

- **Equitable Education for All:** On May 16th the RI Senate passed legislation sponsored by Sen. Roger A. Picard to place a question on the next statewide ballot asking voters to amend the state constitution to guarantee “an equitable, adequate and meaningful education to each child.”
- **RI Senate Healthcare Package:** The RI Senate Health & Human Services committees passed 7 bills out of the Senate's healthcare package this past week. See a description of the bills in [this press release](#)

My Budget Priorities

- **\$16 million added to the Green Bond:** This would be put on the ballot for voters in November. Previous green bonds were overwhelmingly approved by

voters and helped fund municipal climate resiliency projects and projects to conserve critical habitat and improve water quality (see below for the RI DEM grants that South Kingstown and Westerly Land Trusts received).

- **2% COLA for retirees:** 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).
- **Fund RIPTA & the RI Transit Master Plan (including Commuter Rail):** The Governor's budget proposal includes \$10 million in unspent ARPA funds - a one-time allocation. This still leaves an \$8 million hole in RIPTA's budget, which could force service cuts and a transit "death spiral" (worse service, fewer riders- a downward spiral). Advocates are pushing for the extra \$8 million that's immediately needed AND funding to implement the RI Transit Master Plan, which includes plans to strengthen commuter rail service.

Join AARP, RI Organizing Project for Lobby Day at the State House on
May 23rd



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

Take Action for Shoreline Access Bills

Past Meetings / Events



Westerly & South Kingstown Land Trusts receive several conservation grants to protect open space

Congratulations to the Westerly Land Trust and South Kingstown Land Trust for getting multiple grants from RIDEM to conserve critical habitat and open space. I'm particularly excited about the space along the Pawcatuck River that contains a paddle craft launch that will be managed by the Westerly Land Trust.

[Read more about the grants here](#)

This funding was made possible by the Green Bond that voters overwhelmingly passed. I've heard that lots of people in the district support adding additional funds to the next Green Bond, so it is one of my budget priorities.



Legislator Volunteer Day with South County Habitat for Humanity

Thank you to the Housing Network of Rhode Island for putting together a legislators' volunteer day and thank you to the long-time volunteers of South County Habitat for Humanity for teaching us about the build process and the mission to help Rhode Islanders achieve the dream of becoming homeowners. Once you plan ahead, with modern building standards you can have highly energy-efficient homes. The houses we worked on in Hopkinton are also designed to be zero-energy ready.

Photo on the right credit: David DelPoio/The Providence Journal



Shoreline Access Bills heard in Judiciary Committee

It's so important to have people testify at the State House who can tell personal stories and examples of why we have to preserve access before abandoning roads, why footpaths to access the water are important, and much more. I was very encouraged by the committee feedback, and that's thanks to these folks here:

Save The Bay - Narragansett Bay (Topher Hamblett)

Saving RI Coastal Access (Conrad Ferla)

The Nature Conservancy in Rhode Island (Angela Tuoni)

RI Saltwater Anglers (Rich Hittinger)

New England Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (Mike Woods)

Richard Langseth (Warwick resident)

Shoutout to Mike Rubin for dedicating his time and legal acumen to these bills, and

Shoutout to House Sponsor Terri Cortvriend



Celebrating AAPI Heritage Month Across RI

Happy AAPI HeritageMonth 2024! Glad to see celebrations throughout RI. RI State Senator Linda Ujifusa and I spoke at a community event in Providence and saw some amazing student performances at University of Rhode Island's celebration. Stay tuned for our May 23, 2024 celebration at the RI State House!





Ribbon-Cutting for Trolls in Ninigret Park

We were so excited for the unveiling of Thomas Dambo's trolls this weekend, made from local recycled pallets, in Ninigret Park. Rep. Bob Craven, Rep. Tina Spears and I presented citations to recognize the artist for bringing his works of art to Rhode Island. Congrats to South County Tourism Council whose team put in multiple weeks of hard work to put this together, and I can't wait to see people come from far and wide to enjoy the park and the trolls. I still have to come back to hike and look for the second troll!



RI Senate Education Summit

At the RI Senate Education Summit, educators, school officials, and elected officials reflected on what measuring success means in our school system.

A big push from RIDE has been to reduce chronic absenteeism and to have teams that outreach to parents if their students are missing more than 10% of days in a school year, or are getting close to that number.

People also brought up a bill that is being considered to put on the ballot a Constitutional Amendment guaranteeing equal opportunity for education for all RI residents.

Thank you Senator Sandra Cano, Senator Hanna Gallo and legislative staff for organizing the summit!



Martin House Books Ribbon-Cutting + Westerly Rehabilitation & Healthcare Center Tour

I met staff and patients at Westerly Rehabilitation & Healthcare Center (it was their annual “prom”. Theme: the Gold Rush). I also witnessed the ribbon cutting of Martin House Books, and I am so glad that this is remaining a bookstore and cafe in the heart of downtown!



Earth Day 2024 in the North End

Happy Earth Day 2024! Great to spend time with the folks in the North End of Westerly. Volunteers picked up litter while Geoff sang Earth Day themed songs to us and the neighbors

Organized by the Greater North End Community Development, Inc

Upcoming Events / Places I'll Be

- **Wed May 22nd near Providence, details TBA:** Reform CRMC Press Conference to draw attention to [S-2928](#)

- **Thurs May 23rd 2:30pm-4pm at the RI State House:** Hosting the second annual AAPI Heritage Month celebration. See news release [here](#)
- **Sat May 25th 9:30am:** Speaking about pending RI Accessory Dwelling Unit legislation at Charlestown by the Sea Civic Association
- **Sun May 26th - Mon May 27th:** Memorial Day Parades in several towns
- **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

If in doubt about what assistance you need or what you're eligible for, **FEMA highly encourages you to still create your account online by Mon May 20th, 2024, and then they can determine your eligibility within a few days after you register.**

Homeowners and Renters: Individual Assistance Grants from FEMA

People across South County (as well as Kent and Providence counties) who sustained damage on their primary home during the Dec 17-19th 2023/Jan 9th-13th 2024 storms can apply. There are a variety of damages you can include in your application, including house damage, car damage, rental assistance if you were displaced as a renter, and losing time from work as a result of the storms.

Note: FEMA cannot reimburse for expenses that were already covered by insurance, but they can usually help with gaps in insurance coverage.

Register online and create your account with [DisasterAssistance.Gov](#), or call 1-800-621-3362.

The deadline to register online is May 20th, 2024. You don't have to complete your application by then, but you have to be registered. If you are unsure about whether you need FEMA funds (for example, your insurance company is still processing your claim), FEMA still encourages you to register and get

yourself in the queue, and then FEMA will work to understand your specific circumstances. You can decide later how much assistance you actually need.

Small Businesses and Homeowners: Low-Interest Loans through SBA for Disaster Relief and Mitigation

Small businesses and homeowners affected by the disaster may also be eligible for low-interest loans (usually 2-3%) through the Small Business Administration (SBA). You can also come back to SBA later to apply for mitigation funds in order to make your structure stronger and more resilient to future storms.

Link to apply: [SBA.gov/Disaster](https://www.sba.gov/disaster)

Apply Now

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

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