



State Senate
— District **38** —

February Newsletter & Scams / Fraud Town Hall on March 17th



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

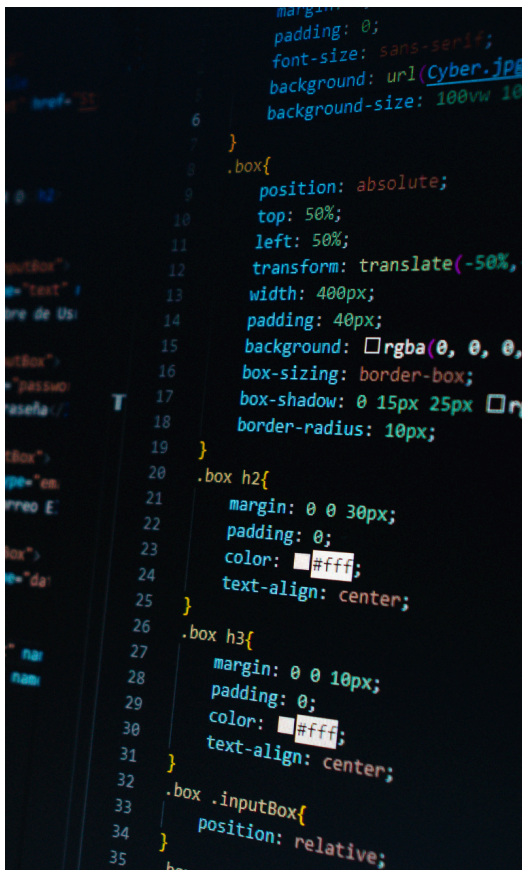
A number of residents have been contacting me about the turmoil with the Trump administration. I understand people's stress and worries, and it's affecting us in the RI legislature too. Working with other folks and organizations who care about the same issues as you and taking action locally is a helpful antidote to feeling stressed or disempowered by the national news.

In the Rhode Island legislature, we are focused on protecting our rights and preparing our own budget in anticipation of Medicaid cuts or other federal cuts that will bring real hardship to Rhode Islanders. In an already challenging budget year, we need to figure out how to balance the budget *and* continue to move forward on climate mitigation & resiliency as well as healthcare and education funding.

Here is one bills of the ~20 bills I've submitted, and I will be talking about it briefly at my March 17th town hall on fraud & scams (see graphic below for details):

- S-16, a bill supported by RI AARP to **regulate crypto ATM's** that are popping up in gas stations and supermarkets. We've seen **victims in Westerly lose thousands of dollars when scammers direct them to send cash through these machines**. According to Westerly police, someone lost \$40,000 in two days and there were multiple instances of \$15,000 or more lost in a single day. Rhode Island, compared to some neighboring states, is behind the curve on regulating this new technology.
 - Feel free to email letters of support to slegislation@rilegislature.gov with the subject line: S-16 Support

Read more about S-16 to regulate crypto ATM's



Protecting Yourself and Others From Scams

RI State Senator Victoria Gu
Rhode Island Attorney General's Office
AARP Rhode Island

10:30am-12pm
Westerly Senior Center
6-8pm Westerly Library

RSVP:
victoria4ri.com/town-hall

Town Hall March 17th: Protecting Yourself & Loved Ones from Scams & Fraud

Cybersecurity starts with everyday choices: the passwords you pick, the links you click. Now more than ever, it's crucial to protect yourself and those around you. Join Senator Victoria Gu, the Rhode Island AARP, and the Office of R.I. Attorney General Neronha for a town hall on protecting yourself from scams on **March 17th 10:30am-**

12pm at the Westerly Senior Center or March 17th 6-7:30pm at the Westerly Library (2nd Floor Auditorium). Participants will learn how to respond to and report a scam, and learn tactics to avoid common scams. Don't miss this opportunity to hear about the tools and strategies you need to stay safe in today's digital world.

RSVP and submit questions: victoria4ri.com/town-hall

Happening at the State House

- The **RI Beach Erosion Commission** (chaired by Rep Azzinaro and Rep Spears is a member) had a presentation Feb 10, 2025 from the Misquamicut Beach Association to talk about their beach nourishment proposal and from Matt Dowling (GIS coordinator, Charlestown) to talk about the science of beach erosion and the status of the temporary fix to the Charlestown Breachway. Watch here: <https://capitolvri.cablecast.tv/show/10787?site=1>
- The **RI Bottle Bill Commission** had a hearing Jan 27th and the big topic was Extended Producer Responsibility - holding manufacturers responsible for the products they produce throughout their entire use/lifecycle. It would shift some of the work of recycling/reuse from towns/states to the manufacturers. So far, six states have adopted EPR laws. Watch here: <https://capitolvri.cablecast.tv/show/10736?seekto=5702&site=1>
- The **RI Commission on Climate Change Impacts & Solutions** had a hearing Feb 12, 2025 on the **effects of climate change on homeowner's insurance in Rhode Island**. Residents of Westerly and Charlestown came to me this year saying that their home insurer dropped them or started charging a lot more (mine did too), sometimes with only 2 weeks' notice to come up with the additional money. What's happening now is just going to be magnified many times over with climate change, sea level rise, and our exposure to storms on RI's southern coast. Watch here: <https://capitolvri.cablecast.tv/show/10810?site=1>
- The **RI Short Term Rental Commission** had a **meeting Feb 5th** with Acting Secretary Deborah Goddard, RI Department of Housing presenting on the **effects of short-term rentals on our housing stock**. [Presentation slides are here](#). Watch here: <https://capitolvri.cablecast.tv/show/10768?site=1>



Thank you! Commuter Rail Letters & Advocates featured in EcoRI and WesterlySun

Read the WesterlySun and EcoRI News Article

Thank you to everyone who has sent letters so far! For those who haven't, click on the link below to fill out a form that will auto-send to Gov McKee and your Congress Member (you can also customize the letter): <https://actionnetwork.org/letters/asking-congressmembers-to-support-westerly-station-upgrade-for-commuter-rail>

Would you like to see more rail service in our area that could take us to NYC, TF Green airport, Providence or Boston by expanding commuter rail service on the existing Northeast rail corridor?

The Westerly Station is being considered next year for an engineering/feasibility study of high-level platforms that would enable commuter rail and greatly improve access for people with disabilities. Gov McKee's support and Congressional support is needed for funding. You can make a difference by sending a letter. Especially

powerful would be testimonial for how you have enjoyed rail travel or how you might use commuter rail.



Charlestown Legislative Priorities

Thank you to the Charlestown Town Council for having myself and Representative Tina Spears at the town council meeting to hear their legislative priorities. Here's a list of what we discussed:

1. Land use and zoning changes with density bonuses.
2. Funding for the Charlestown Breachway permanent fix (if the federal funding can't be counted on, we suggested it could be put into the next RI Green Bond)
3. Review of Rules relating to procurements procedures (i.e., contracts, bidding process, MPA, etc.)

#4 and #5 below are related to my upcoming bill and **coordinated efforts with our representatives in South County and Newport/Middletown to fight for short-term rental tax revenue** to be allocated to the town it's collected in, rather than to a general pool in the state.

4. Funding from revenues from Charlestown Airbnb's to be allocated to Affordable Housing/Work Force Housing issues within Charlestown.
5. Revenue from Charlestown hotel taxes to be allocated to stay within the Town.

Cybersecurity Institute at RIC

Thank you Congressman Langevin for hosting us at the new Cybersecurity Institute at Rhode Island College. RI's recent cybersecurity breach has shown us the importance of growing and educating our workforce about cybersecurity, and more students are studying or majoring in it at RIC. Looking forward to seeing the new Cyber Range in the coming months (pictured), which will be a simulated environment for students and public/private employees to practice defending against cyberattacks.



WBLQ Resiliency Radio Hour

Thanks Katy for having me on WBLQ - FM 103.1 and Stereo 1230 resiliency radio hour! We talked about so many important topics including how climate change is affecting home insurance and measures each homeowner can take including having a more resilient roof. We also touched on the status of the bottle recycling bill and CRMC reform, and URI research on offshore reef structures

If you missed it, check out the recording on WBLQ's podcast page for Feb

13th <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/14Ds82t5szG/>



Supporting South County Firefighters & EMS

Glad to support the RI Southern Firefighters League in their annual legislators' night. In the past few years we've taken steps to phase out PFAS in firefighting foam & firefighter gear and properly dispose of any remaining foam. We also doubled EMS reimbursement rates to help local providers stay fiscally solvent. We still have more work to do and we're very grateful for our neighbors who put their lives on the line, as volunteers, to help our community.

Cybersecurity 101

We had our first hearing of the new Senate Committee on AI & Emerging Technologies yesterday, and it was an honor to chair it. Great presentation by Douglas Alexander from RIC Cybersecurity Institute. We did a Cybersecurity 101 presentation to improve our committee's own knowledge and understanding of a crucial and growing area of concern, which is cybersecurity. Every day, Rhode Islanders rely on digital platforms for access to healthcare and vital programs, and it is our responsibility to ensure that their data and sensitive information remains protected from malicious actors.



State Street Elementary School Milestone

Great to see the first milestone of the State Street Elementary School re-construction! The elementary school students signed the first beam and watched as it was lifted into place. Thanks to the workers who are working through these freezing temperatures in the winter!



South County Habitat for Humanity Finishes Net-Zero-Ready Homes

Congratulations to **South County Habitat for Humanity** for completing their build in Hopkinton and helping seven families achieve the dream of home ownership. All the volunteers, the new home owners' sweat equity, and even high school students in Chariho's career-technical education program, came together to make this happen.

During our legislator's volunteer day in the spring, Senator Bridget Valverde and I learned a lot about the process of making these houses airtight and highly energy

efficient, which helps the incoming families with their utility bills and the environment. The houses are net-zero ready, meaning that once solar panels go in, each house will produce about the same amount of energy that it consumes, over the course of a year.

Free Home Energy Assessments and Heavily Discounted Weatherization through RISE and RI Energy

Many residents have also come to me about their utility bills, and we did have a really long cold snap the last two months, so I encourage everyone to get their free energy assessment, which is the first step to getting heavily discounted weatherization services for your home that will lower your heating bills. If you need to reach out to your landlord about it, you can tell them that weatherization for tenant-occupied units is typically 100% subsidized (no cost).

Schedule your assessment at <https://www.riseengineering.com/residential/get-started>

[View email in browser](#)