



State Senate — District **38** —

April Newsletter: Responding to Federal Cuts



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

There's a lot of anxiety right now about what's happening with the federal government—and honestly, it's warranted. Rhode Island is already seeing the impacts of major federal funding cuts, from public health to climate resilience to workforce training. While it's easy to feel overwhelmed, this is also a moment to lean in and speak up. We *can* protect our communities, but it takes all of us.

Here's just a snapshot of what's happening in a couple RI departments:

- The RI Department of Health alone is facing a **\$31 million loss in rescinded CDC grants**, including funding for our pandemic readiness efforts, vaccination clinics, monitoring and outbreak responses for contagious diseases and foodborne illnesses, and core laboratory functions at state health department laboratories.
- 25% of DEM's funding comes from federal sources and 1/3 of CRMC's funding comes from NOAA. **Many functions of scientific marine research & marine resource management rely heavily on federal initiatives or funding.** In the

past few months, RI DEM has reported that for some grants, they spent the money up front that they were authorized to spend (a normal process), and now they're just applying for reimbursement but not getting it.

- We could lose hundreds of millions of federal Medicaid dollars and tens of thousands of people (or more) could lose vital healthcare coverage if the Trump administration cuts Medicaid. Here's a projection of how Medicaid cuts could impact Wood River Health, a federally-qualified health center, and South County residents: <https://thepublicsradio.org/health/rhode-island-health-centers-raise-alarm-over-proposed-medicaid-cuts/>

What you can do: Push for a state budget that protects Rhode Islanders against funding cuts, which most likely requires raising some revenue. Proposals that have been in the works for years have included:

- 3% increase on the top 1% of income earners (similar to the Millionaires tax that has been implemented in Massachusetts since 2023). [RevenueForRI.org](https://revenueforri.org)
- The Taylor Swift tax - on non-owner-occupied homes valued at over \$1 million
- Tax on house-flipping profits (short-term capital gains from buying and selling real estate within less than a year)
- What are your ideas/feedback?

For more updates: Our Congress members (Jack Reed, Sheldon Whitehouse, Seth Magaziner, Gabe Amo) are hard at work pushing back against unlawful power grabs, cuts to programs like Social Security or Medicaid, and much more. They have newsletters so you can get up-to-date information about what's happening and how it impacts Rhode Island.

Happening at the State House



- **Strengthening Rhode Island's Primary Care Workforce** 🇺🇸

"Thanks to our new Primary Care Training Sites Program in partnership with RIDOH, made possible by our legislature, we're responding to the needs of our workforce, adding capacity to recruit and train future primary care providers and encourage them to stay and work in Rhode Island," said Debra Hurwitz, MBA, BSN, RN, executive director of the Care Transformation Collaborative of RI.

RI will be making up to \$90,000 in grant funding available to numerous primary care sites to support their work to train more students and mentor Rhode Island's next generation of physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants. In total \$2.7 million was allocated for training, so more grants will be coming. For more info or to apply: <https://health.ri.gov/.../primary-care-training-site-program>

📖 Read and share the full article by the Boston Globe here:

🔗 <https://www.bostonglobe.com/.../primary-care-doctor.../>

Congratulations Senator **Pam Lauria, RI Senator District 32** and Representative **Kathy Fogarty State Representative District 35**, primary sponsors of the bill we passed in 2024

- **Bottle Recycling and Extended Producer Responsibility Bills Introduced:**

A joint RI House & Senate study commission has made two powerful recommendations to reduce waste and boost sustainability in Rhode Island:

- ✅ Implement a Bottle Bill
- ✅ Adopt an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Program

Here's why this matters:

📦 EPR shifts the responsibility for packaging waste back to the producers—encouraging innovation and reducing what ends up in our landfills.

🗑️ The Bottle Bill incentivizes consumers to return containers, boosting recycling rates and keeping streets and waterways cleaner.

These are smart, proven tools that will benefit our environment and our communities.

We thank Senator Mark McKenney and Representative Carol Hagan McEntee for their leadership on this issue.

📖 Read and share the full article by ecoRI here:

🔗 <https://ecori.org/study-commission-recommends-r-i...>

- **Utility Reform Bills**

Last week, the Senate Commerce Committee held hearings on a dozen utility reform bills (including two of my bills) aimed at protecting Rhode Island ratepayers and improving transparency. Read my [press release](#) for more information. These bills are a response to public frustration over high utility bills. While RI Energy and its parent company, PPL, opposed nearly all of these reforms, the message from the public was loud and clear: People over Profits.

- **Public Testimony Now Posted Online:** The RI Senate has enacted a rule change to publish written public testimony online, enhancing transparency and public access to legislative proceedings. You may view public documents for any committee

here: <https://www.rilegislature.gov/senators/SenateComDocs/Pages/default.aspx>

Submit Testimony for Shoreline Access Bills



SHORELINE ACCESS BILLS 2025

S-716

Requires public hearing & review procedure for parking changes near public rights-of-way to the shore

S-349

Option to preserve abandoned roads as walking, biking trails

S-626

Towns must maintain a list of public rights-of-ways & include in official maps

Submit Letters of Support

We have a new link that'll help you submit letters of support for the shoreline access bills and send a copy to your State Representative and State Senator, all from one form: <https://actionnetwork.org/letters/5edc2cec5865fd385045153a33cd3fc9>



Monthly Commuter Rail Working Group Meetings

On Monday our working group of local commuter rail advocates (mostly from Westerly) discussed more strategies to build partnerships between RI and CT and an economic benefits study on commuter rail expansion! This time, we were joined by several new advocates and were especially thrilled to be joined by Representative State Representative Nick Menapace, a newly elected Connecticut leader and enthusiastic supporter of commuter rail.

Next meeting scheduled for: Monday May 12, 9:30am at Westerly Library 2nd Floor

Thank you to everyone who has sent letters so far! For those who haven't, use this form to send a letter 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>

Read the Providence Journal Article on Commuter Rail Expansion



Championing “Food Is Medicine”

I had the honor of speaking at **Meals on Wheels of Rhode Island** about S-333 / H-775 that would launch a pilot program providing medically tailored meals and produce boxes for Medicaid recipients with diet-related illnesses. For the cost of one nights' stay in an emergency room, you could provide medically tailored meals to a person for 6 months! Across the country, this has been shown time and time again to be a cost-effective way to improve health outcomes and reduce healthcare costs (and our state budget costs)—because nutrition is healthcare.

Thanks also to Majority Whip **Senator David P. Tikoian** for attending and supporting!

To email testimony:

HouseFinance@rilegislature.gov with
subject line H-5775

slegislation@rilegislature.gov with subject
line S-333

More resources:

National Produce Prescription

Collaborative **<https://nppc.health/>**

Tufts University Food is

Medicine **<https://tuftsfoodismedicine.org/>**

Celebrating 1 year at Martin House Books

📖✨ Celebrating 1 incredible year of stories, smiles, and community at Martin House Books in downtown Westerly! Friday was a joyful reminder of how bookstores are more than just shelves of books — they bring together people of all ages for events and moments of connection, curiosity, and creativity



AAPI History Museum - Ribbon Cutting

What an incredible day for Rhode Island—and for our entire AAPI community. For generations, Asian-Americans have contributed to this country—to its economy, its culture, and its democracy. And yet, our stories have too often been left untold.

This museum, at 44 Hospital St in Providence, will serve as a very valuable resource for our educators teaching AAPI history and the history of Asian-Americans in Rhode Island.

To Jeannie Salomon and the Cultural Society, to the Mellon Foundation, to all the

educators, curators, and community partners- thank you so much for your work and congratulations on the grand opening!

Find out more and follow
@aapihistorymuseum



URI Day at the RI State House

Great talking with a URI master's student about their project researching cyber defense of important infrastructure like the power grid (with some AI assistance). Proud of our URI students, faculty and staff! -
at URI day at the RI State House

Celebrating Earth Day: Attend or Organize A Litter Pick-Up

The Litter-Free Rhode Island Cleanup/Beautification Microgrant initiative aims to highlight the Litter-Free Rhode Island campaign and the value of the environment and to recognize the importance of people improving the quality of life in their communities.

Participating groups may request grants up to \$500 to conduct litter pick-ups timed to be held around Earth Day (April 22) or other volunteer clean-ups and beautification projects if they are completed by June 30, 2025. Applicants do not need to apply for the full \$500 and there is no match requirement.

The deadline to apply has been extended to May 15, 2025

[Apply for a Rhode Island Cleanup/Beautification Microgrant](#)