

VICTORIA GU

State Senate — District **38** —

February Newsletter: Start of the 2026 Session



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Our first month of legislative session was very busy with drafting bills and getting co-sponsors and House sponsors. My first two bills came from two constituents in Westerly: one person only had 2 weeks' notice before a huge increase in her home insurance premium (my bill requires 2 months notice); another person didn't get enough advance notice of a tax sale of her home (my bill would nullify the tax sale if the notice requirements are not met). Feel free to reach out to me with more issues/ideas! sen-gu@rilegislature.gov

Commuter Rail Updates



Right now, CT Shore Line East ends in New London, and stations like Mystic and Westerly lack the high-level platforms needed for commuter rail stops. Trains also need a place to turn around and be stored overnight—something Mystic cannot accommodate, but Westerly can.

A practical near-term solution is **mini-high platforms**, which are shorter platforms that meet accessibility standards at a much lower cost than full length high-level platforms. Pairing mini-high platforms in Mystic and Westerly with a **shared train layover and storage facility in Westerly** could make expanded service feasible while keeping costs down.

Listen to myself and Alex Berardo as we update listeners on WBLQ about our latest meeting and collaboration with our counterparts in Connecticut

The one-sentence summary is:

- In 2026, RIDOT, in collaboration with Amtrak and with information from CTDOT about train storage requirements for Shore Line East, plans to prepare and submit a planning application to the Federal Railroad Administration's Federal-State Partnership (FSP) program for improvements in Westerly.

Next rail advocates meeting: March 2nd 6pm @ Westerly Library

Fundraiser Feb 26, 2026 @ 6pm



Join us for a fundraiser in
support of

VICTORIA GU RI STATE SENATOR DISTRICT 38

THUR FEB 26, 2026

6-8PM

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

Suggested Donation
\$40 Young Professional
\$100 Supporter
\$250 Champion
victoria4ri.com/feb26

Ever since a Republican group announced their intention to target Rhode Island Democrats, including myself, over gun safety laws and other policies that we passed, it's made one thing clear: we won't be intimidated.

Reaching voters directly—through newsletters, mail, canvassing, and community events—ensures that people have the information they need to make informed choices, rather than having their voices drowned out by outside PAC money. Thank you to everyone who has already stepped up. If you've donated recently and plan to join us, please don't feel any pressure to give again—your support in all its forms means a great deal.

Here's the date/time/location:

February 26, 2026 6-8pm

Asia Grille (Private Dining Room): 140 Hillside Rd, Cranston, RI

You can get your ticket online: victoria4ri.com/feb26

Or checks can be made out to:

Friends of Victoria Gu

PO Box 116, Charlestown, RI, 02813

P.S. By tradition, Senators hold fundraisers up north during the January–June legislative session so colleagues from across the state can attend. We'll also be hosting a fundraiser in the Westerly/Charlestown area in the late spring or early summer, and I look forward to gathering closer to home.

Get your ticket today: victoria4ri.com/feb26



Governor's State of the State

I joined the House & Senate to hear Governor Dan McKee's State of the State address, and I'm looking forward to digging into the budget. I'm especially encouraged by its **focus on keeping Rhode Island's uninsured rate low**, including \$9.5 million to backfill recently expired federal enhanced Affordable Care Act subsidies. This will help **keep coverage affordable for approximately 20,000 Rhode Islanders**—and without it, an estimated 6,500 people could see their coverage lapse, with ripple effects like delayed care, preventable emergency room visits, more uncompensated care for hospitals treating uninsured patients (with already strained budgets), and healthier people existing the insurance marketplace altogether (driving up costs for those who remain).

Roadmap Documents for 2026

The plans I mentioned in the last newsletter are out, just in time to help shape the 2026 legislative session. I usually talk about these more in-depth at WBLQ Radio Station, where I'm on the morning show for an hour every two weeks / month.

- Statewide Climate Resiliency Plan (this planning was a result of Representative Tina Spears and I passing the Act on Coasts in 2024)
 - Westerly Wastewater Treatment Plant and our southern barrier beaches were identified as priority assets because of how vulnerable they are to storm events and sea level rise
- Report on the feasibility of starting a medical school at URI to address the primary care workforce shortage (here's a preview of an interim report)
- Governor McKee's AI Task Force Report (I invited Congressman Langevin, who chaired the Task Force, to discuss the report findings with our AI & Emerging Technologies Committee in the Senate on Feb 10, 2026- tune in at 3pm on Capitol TV or watch it later at the same link)



Westerly Senior Center Legislative Grant

I was glad to deliver a legislative grant this year to support the Senior Center's lunch program, which provides good nutrition and brings seniors together for connection and community. 🧡

Along with healthy meals, the center's social services help older adults stay independent for as long as possible.

Chariho Joint School Committee + Town Council + Reps Meeting

At our recent South County Education Leaders Breakfast and the Chariho Omnibus School Committee meeting, two funding priorities stood out:

Special Education: The budget ask is for the state to fully fund high-cost special education (historically it's been about 56% funded) so districts can sustain services without sacrificing other priorities.

 **Out-of-District Transportation Costs**
Students with special circumstances (DCYF, homeless, special education) sometimes require long distance transportation to get to and from an out-of-district school, and currently it's their home district that has to pay for that. The budget ask is to 1) fund these costs at the state level 2) find cost-saving efficiencies within the statewide busing system. There has been a legislative commission to study that, but it's still a work in progress



Youth Voices

Glad to show Dominick Lombard around the State House in January! Dominick is one of Westerly High Schools' Class of



2023 star graduates and now President of the Harvard College Democrats

Jonnycake Center Legislative Grant

Proud to support the Jonnycake Center of Westerly with my annual legislative grant, helping their food pantry deliver critical support to local families. The thrift shop was buzzing during their “National Pie Day” baking supplies sale! Every meal served and every contribution makes a difference.



Winter Preparedness Tips

Power Outages: Maps, Alerts, How to Report

This was definitely the coldest stretch of weather we’ve seen in recent memory. RI Energy shares the following ways to manage energy costs and stay safe at home:

- Lower your thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting and when sleeping or not at home

- Seal drafts around doors and windows
- Open blinds and drapes during the day when the sun is shining for natural warmth, and close them at night to keep warmth in
- Keep vents and radiators clear; make sure furniture or curtains aren't blocking airflow
- Be mindful that electric space heaters can significantly increase energy use, and always exercise caution when using supplemental or alternative heating sources
- Prepare a storm kit
- Use a broom to clear snow and ice from the gas meter and appliance vents to prevent hazards
- Avoid downed power lines and report them immediately to 911 or our call center at 855-743-1101
- Review these [cold weather safety tips](#) for guidance on using heating equipment safely, protecting your home during extreme temperatures and how to stay connected to us.

**Repeating because of the cold weather we're going through-
Do you know someone in need of emergency assistance to pay for heating oil/fuel?** A couple places to contact are:

- Westerly: **Jonnycake Center of Westerly**
- Charlestown: The Charlestown Senior Center
- South County towns: **Tri-County CAP** for Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) applications, Heat Pumps and Weatherization, and Emergency Boiler Repair

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