

ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL OF RHODE ISLAND

2024 TOP LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The Environment Council of Rhode Island is a coalition of more than 60 Rhode Island organizations that advocate for policies to protect and enhance the environment. Our policy priorities address some of Rhode Island's most pressing environmental issues.

4.29.2024

S-2952 / H-7617: Building Decarbonization Act

Lead Sponsors: Senator Kallman and Representative Kislak

S-2535 / H-8127: Environmental Justice Act

Lead Sponsors: Senator Euer and Representative Alzate

H-7774: Appropriation of \$78 Million to RI Public Transit Authority

Lead Sponsor: Representative Alzate

S-2952 / H-7617: Building Decarbonization Act (Kallman / Kislak): Rhode Island's building sector (including residential, commercial, and industrial) produces almost as much greenhouse gas emissions as the largest sector – transportation. However, our efforts to reduce building emissions are far behind the progress underway for the transportation and electricity sectors. This bill begins to address emissions from both existing buildings and new construction, with two main sections.

Section 1 creates a benchmarking program for large buildings. It records usage of fuel, water, and GHG emissions over a three-year period. The data collected will enable the Office of Energy Resources to develop a Building Performance Standard for **large buildings to reduce their emissions per the Act on Climate**.

Section 2 addresses emissions from new construction by providing stepwise **tiers, by which new buildings must become all-electric to meet the Act on Climate**. New building permits will initially specify that buildings must be "electric-ready", followed by requirements for public buildings to be built all-electric, while also giving municipalities the authority to require all-electric construction on a faster timeline. The bill includes provisions for public projects to utilize apprenticeships and labor standards and for affordable housing and electricity. Making our new buildings all-electric now avoids stranded assets of gas appliances and pipes.

S. Sponsors: Kallman, Valverde, DiMario, LaMountain, Lawson, Sosnowski, Miller, Euer, McKenney, Britto

H. Sponsors: Kislak, Cortvriend, Fogarty, Carson, Speakman, McEntee, Spears, Morales, McGaw, Felix

S-2535 / H-8127: Environmental Justice Act (Euer / Alzate): This bill requires the Department of Environmental Management to designate specific geographic areas of the state as **Environmental Justice (EJ) Areas**, based on factors including low-income levels, percentage of minority population, and/or lack of English language proficiency. Designation of an EJ area may also be initiated by petition by area residents. Under this bill, approval of certain permit applications must include assessment of their environmental impact, **including cumulative impacts** within the specified area (a new consideration specified by this bill). Additionally, all such permits will require a public hearing that provides for **the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of those who live in the area**.

Previous versions of this bill have passed the Senate in each of the last three years but have not passed the House of Representatives. The sponsors continue to work with the House to achieve passage of this year's bill.

S. Sponsors: Euer, Mack, Miller, Cano, DiMario, Murray, Quezada, Lauria, Bissaillon, Zurier

H. Sponsors: Alzate, Batista, Carson, Spears, Cotter, McGaw, Donovan, DeSimone, Speakman, Morales

Over, please

ECRI's 2024 TOP PRIORITIES – CONTINUED

H-7774: Appropriation of \$78 Million to RI Public Transit Authority (Alzate): Transportation is the largest source of GHG emissions in the state of Rhode Island, making up almost 40% of the state's emissions. To reduce emissions from the transportation sector, we must not only electrify all vehicles on the road but reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by decreasing the number of single-occupancy vehicle trips. Expanding public transportation is an important way to do just that. **Rhode Island's Transit Master Plan ("Transit Forward RI") shows the way**, but since its adoption in December 2020, it has never been funded.

In fact, **RIPTA has been underfunded for years**. Rhode Island does not spend nearly as much on public transportation (\$19 per capita per year) as its neighboring states (\$68 in CT , \$239 in MA). Furthermore, RIPTA does not have enough drivers due to low salaries.

The Governor's proposed 2025 budget is **\$8 million below RIPTA's current need**. An additional **\$24 million is required to hire, train, and pay drivers a livable wage**. An annual supplement of **\$46 million will also be needed to start meaningful state-wide funding of Transit Forward RI**. The \$78 million total requested by Rep. Alzate's H -7774 is about 0.6% of the enacted 2024 budget, and about 9% of its total transportation funding. According to Grow Smart RI, 77% of Rhode Islanders live within a 10-minute walk of public transportation. We need more frequent buses and more efficient bus routes. Now is the time to develop real public transit in Rhode Island – for the environment, for public health, and to attract enough riders to make a difference.

H. Sponsors: Alzate, Cortvriend, Tanzi, Morales, Stewart, Giraldo, Casimiro, Donovan, Diaz, Hull

ECRI's list of legislative priorities may be updated from time to time. The date of issue is printed in the upper righthand corner. The most recent version will be posted on our website.

Updates and more information about the Environment Council of Rhode Island are available at our website: <https://www.environmentcouncilri.org/>

ECRI publishes its **Green Report Card** every two years, after the legislature adjourns, and prior to the election of a new General Assembly. The Report Card reviews the environmental events of the legislature, including individual voting records, the administration, and related affairs. We hope that it will keep legislators, environmental advocates and the public aware of Rhode Island Environmental Policy Issues and promote their informed participation in supporting our environment.

The 2021 - 2022 edition of ECRI's Green Report Card is available on the first page of our website. This year's Report Card will be available in the latter part of August.

Please contact our Co-VPs of Policy with any questions:

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ECRI LEGISLATIVE AGENDA 2024

4.29.2024

Senate #	House #	SUPPORTED BILLS	Senate Sponsor	House Sponsor
		<i>Environmental Justice</i>		
2036	7017	Extends utility termination moratorium	Murray	Morales
2366	7286	Income-tiered subsidy for home energy utility costs ("PIPP")	Sosnowski	Slater
2292		The Green Justice Zone Act	Mack	
2535	8127	ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ACT Top Priority	Euer	Alzate
2668		Equity Impact Assessment and Budget Equity Impact Act	Mack	
2405	7463	Alerts for shelters from extreme heat & cold for people at-risk	Mack	Tanzi
		<i>Climate & Energy</i>		
2956		Utility Bill (helps PUC reduce GHG emissions) *	Euer	
2541	8043	State Agency GHG Emissions Reporting Act *	DiMario	Bennett
2499	7811	2024 Energy Storage Act *	Euer	Handy
2168	7593	Requires Energy Capable School Buildings	Pearson	Cortvriend
	7285	Establishes thermal energy network infrastructure		Cortvriend
2293	7616	Renewable Ready Program - (brownfield redevelopment) *	DiMario	Speakman
2849	7427	Excavators must report utility pipe damage or leak	DiMario	DeSimone
2277	7495	Creates rebates & training for battery leafblowers	Zurier	Boylan
2356	7496	Establishes Education & Workforce Climate Education program*	Lawson	Boylan
	7731	Study Commission on climate change impacts & solutions *		Cortvriend
2332	7685	Oil Spill Prevention Fund - to support EC4 *	DiMario	Cortvriend
2543	7857	Lead by example - State's bottles, efficiency, & EVs *	Miller	Boylan
2595	7859	State & Municipal Vehicles: if replaced, must be EVs *	DiMario	McGaw
		<i>Budget</i>		
	7550	Bond Req: Green Econ, Ag, Open Space & Forests \$66 million		Cotter
2336		Sen. Res: Bond for Ag. land, Open space, Forests & Habitat	DiPalma	
	7774	\$78 MILLION APPROPRIATION FOR RIPTA Top Priority		Alzate
		<i>Transportation</i>		
	7918	Bond Funding for Bike Mobility Plan		Tanzi
	7136	Allows RIPTA & MBTA dual commuter-rail passes		Lombardi
2510	7353	House Resolution: RIE & PUC: To Develop EV Charger Incentives	Ujifusa	McGaw
	7674	Exempts bicycles from sales tax		Handy
2829	7713	3 classes of electric bikes; DEM regulates use on state properties	Euer	Boylan
2576	8010	Purchasing Co-op for State & Municipal EVs	DiMario	McGaw
		<i>Buildings & Homes</i>		
2848	7782	RI Clean Heat Standard Act - Tradable Credits	DiMario	Cortvriend
2952	7617	BUILDING DECARBONATION ACT of 2024 Top Priority	Kallman	Kislak
2630	7062	Uniform Zoning Standards for Adult Dwelling Units	Gu	Speakman
2638	7699	RI Housing & Conservation Trust Fund Act	Bissaillon	Speakman
		<i>Food & Agriculture</i>		
2753	7856	Compost Fund Grants to increase composting	Valverde	Cortvriend
2335	7684	Tax break for urban & small farmers	Sosnowski	McGaw
2941		Restricted receipt fund for farmers (chemical licenses, etc.) *	DiPalma	

* = board approval is pending

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4.29.2024

Senate #	House #	SUPPORTED BILLS	Senate Sponsor	House Sponsor
<i>Water & Toxics</i>				
2090		Requires Radon testing & mitigation for sales	Ruggerio	
2152	7356	Comprehensive PFAS Ban Act of 2024	Kallman	Cortvriend
2296	7359	Prohibits lawn care pesticides near schools *	Miller	Carson
2745	7783	Prohibits use of second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides	Murray	Kislak
<i>Waste</i>				
	7023	Extended Producer Responsibility - packaging		Bennett
2303	7357	Prohibits High-heat Waste Facilities	Ujifusa	McGaw
2300	7515	Bans plastic microparticles from products	Cano	Boylan
2850	7619	Updates Toxic Packaging Act (PFAS, PVC, polystyrene)	Valverede	Cortvriend
<i>Land - Forest - Shore</i>				
2151	7431	Re: Net-metering (solar siting): fixes minor text errors	DiMario	Speakman
2185	7376	Coastal Home buyers must acknowledge public shore rights *	Gu	Cortvriend
	7296	Supports DOT planting pollinator-friendly species		McGaw
	7361	H. Resolution: Commission re RI Beach Erosion and Remedies		Azzinaro
2928	8148	Replaces CRMC with State Department of Coastal Resources	Gu	Cortvriend
2641	7645	Qualified abandonment of town roads (conversion)	Gu	Cortvriend
2882	7728	Fire mitigation plan required for forests >500 Acres *	LaMountain	Cotter
<i>Climate Resilience</i>				
2043	7246	Planning: climate change, sea-rise, coastal resilience	Lauria	Boylan
2298	7022	Act on Coasts - Coastal Resiliency	Gu	Spears
2549	7999	Municipal Infrastructure Grants - Extended from 2023 budget	DiMario	McEntee
<i>To Oppose</i>				
2044	7816	Adds "ethical energy standards" to Act on Climate (oppose)	de la Cruz	Newberry
2155		Solar power facilities must be carbon neutral (oppose)	Rogers	
2823	7491	Authorizes RIPTA contracting for transit center (oppose)	Acosta	O'Brien

* = board approval is pending