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Environment Council of Rhode Island Releases Green Report Card

Providence, Rhode Island -- The Environment Council of Rhode Island (ECRI) released its biennial Green Report Card today. The report highlights critical environmental issues that were considered by state legislators during the 2015 and 2016 sessions. Lawmakers in the General Assembly were given a letter grade based on their voting record.

“The Green Report Card is a reflection on key environmental policies in the past two years,” explained ECRI’s Vice President of Policy Kat Burnham, “It distinguishes Rhode Island’s dedicated green leaders in the State House”.

The bills in the report card include a range of topics, notably renewable energy, land and water conservation, waste, and transportation. ECRI member organizations actively lobbied and organized to advance or defeat those pieces of legislation. Many environmental advocates were particularly pleased to celebrate the passage of the amendments to the RI Cesspool Act in 2015, which works to phase out polluting cesspools. This was a major triumph for water quality and public health. Also laudable was the success of renewable energy bills in 2016. The extension of the Renewable Energy Standard and Renewable Energy Fund, coupled with other expansions, will keep Rhode Island on track to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

As with any session, there were missed opportunities for legislation such as placing a clear price on carbon dioxide emissions, updating building efficiency rating systems, and reducing packaging waste. Lead sponsors for those bills were still awarded credit.

The Green Report Card also features a review of Governor Raimondo’s first two years in office and the noteworthy environmental decisions of her administration.

The environmental community looks forward to the 2016 ballot which includes the Green Economy Bond referendum that will improve local communities and the state’s natural beauty if approved by voters in November. “ECRI will continue to promote effective solutions that will boost our economy and sustain Rhode Island for years to come,” said Burnham.

The report card emphasizes ECRI’s clear position against potential new natural gas investments. With tremendous progress in the clean energy sector, investing in a new power plant or pipeline is the wrong approach.

“ECRI strongly opposes the proposal to build a new, long-lived fossil-fuel plant in Rhode Island, because building this plant would make it impossible for the state to meet its short-, medium-, and long-term goals for carbon emissions reductions,” the Council wrote in a statement earlier this year.

Lawmakers can expect to see ECRI members continue to advocate for the sustainability of Rhode Island. The environmental community stands by the evaluations in the Green Report Card. Legislators old and new should take note; their efforts do not go unnoticed.

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The Environment Council of Rhode Island is a coalition of more than 60 organizations and individuals whose mission is to serve as an effective voice for developing and advocating policies and laws that protect and enhance the environment.

www.environmentcouncilri.org