

Environment Council of Rhode Island

Rhode Island General Assembly

2011 - 2012 Green Report Card

General Assembly Earns a 'B-' During an Unfocused Session

The Environment Council of Rhode Island (ECRI) offers this biennial report card to highlight important environmental issues considered by the Rhode Island General Assembly in the session spanning 2011 through 2012. The headlines from the last two years have been dominated by pension reform, questionable decisions by the Economic Development Corporation, and municipal bankruptcy. In the fall of 2011, a special legislative session was called to handle a single issue: the unfunded pension liability for state employees. In this context, attention to environmental issues dropped throughout the two year period. Although significant pieces of legislation were passed early on, opportunities for progress on key environmental issues were also missed.

Renewable Energy Legislative Package

The greatest victory in this two-year session was the 2011 passage of a nation-leading suite of three renewable energy bills. Rhode Island now has one of the best – and most comprehensive – sets of renewable energy statutes in the country. Indeed, our state statutes have been used as models for efforts by environmentalists elsewhere in New England, as well as New York, Iowa, Oregon, and California. ECRI members look forward to further implementation of these laws to bring additional renewable energy to the state.

Net Metering (S457, H5939) - The new law allows all renewable sources to net meter, except landfill gas. This was a major victory, because prior net metering law in RI allowed only wind and solar. The law provides full retail rate to all net metering facilities, and lifts any cap on number of meters a self-generator can offset. (Rhode Island had

been one of only two net metering states with such a cap, and ours was the lowest.)

Distributed Generation Standard Contract (S723, H6104) - The purpose of the statute is to provide a simple, user-friendly mechanism for small renewable energy projects that cannot afford an army of lawyers to negotiate a separate contract with the utility. For these smaller projects, there will be a simple, plain-English contract, and a standard price for each separate type of renewable energy. Distributed Generation contracts are for 15 years.

Interconnection (S721; H6222) - Getting renewable energy projects – especially small, local ones – interconnected to the electricity grid had been a major bottleneck in Rhode Island. This statute sets a definite timeline and fee schedule for interconnections, providing regulator certainty for emerging renewable energy companies.

Transportation Investment

Another pressing issue has been untangling the funding for transportation in Rhode Island. This includes infrastructure improvement, investment in public transit, and implementing Complete Streets design for all road users, including pedestrians, bik-

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ers, transit riders, cars and trucks.

In 2011, the General Assembly enacted a significant change in our transportation funding system which ended the need for biennial bonds to raise the money to provide the state money needed to receive federal highway dollars. This money comes from the license and registration fees paid by users. These fees are reinvested in our infrastructure, a common sense solution for a pressing fiscal problem.

The 2011 General Assembly did not include RIPTA in this funding system, leaving it to face significant budget shortfalls. The *Transit Investment and Debt Reduction Act* of 2012 was advocated for by ECRI members. It garnered broad and unprecedented support from constituents and community groups, including RIPTA management, ATU members, AFL-CIO, Chamber of Commerce, the Coalition for Transportation Choices and more than half of the House members. Despite the overwhelming popularity, it was not brought to a vote or included in the state budget.

Because of a failure to provide stable and predictable funding for RIPTA, budget shortfalls are predicted early in 2013. This issue will need to be revisited immediately in the next legislative session.

Making Progress on Solid Waste

With Rhode Island's Central Landfill having only another 20 years of usable life left, it is essential to invest time and energy in alternative ways to dispose waste. This begins with reducing unnecessary consumption, improving recycling collection systems, and increasing participation in available programs.

A producer responsibility framework bill (H5888 / S459) was introduced in 2011. This innovative proposal would have created a consistent and predictable plan to involve product manufacturers in the disposal of their products. Even though it provided regulatory certainty and predictability for small and large business alike, this bill was met with opposition from many trade associations. It

would have brought together stakeholders to develop a product take-back program for up to two new products every two years. Each program would be developed in collaboration with product manufacturers. This would have developed new opportunities for economic development while solving our waste crisis.

Though the legislature failed to act in 2011, this leap backward was followed by two steps forward in 2012. Thanks to dedicated leadership, Rhode Island became the fourth State to enact a producer responsibility bill for unused paint. This program, which will be implemented in 2014, will reduce the amount of paint that is sent to the landfill, provide more convenient collection for consumers, and reduce regulations on small businesses that choose to collect the product. A victory for all parties, it represents that next step in collaboration between product manufacturers and the environmental community in solving the state's waste management challenges.

Additionally, with the passage of S3073, Rhode Island will be the first state to look at policy models to collect and recycle more packaging materials under a producer responsibility program. Commission members have been named and meetings are set to begin in November. The commission will produce a report highlighting its findings in March 2013.

Moving Forward on Climate Change

Rhode Island communities are already experiencing rising air and water temperatures, increasing storm intensity, changing precipitation patterns and rising sea level. In 2010, the General Assembly established a Climate Change Commission consisting of legislators, agency staff and a range of stakeholders.

Appointments were completed and the Commission first convened in December of 2011. With financial support from the Rhode Island Foundation and staff support from the Rhode Island Sea

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Chafee's First Two Years: Delivers on Commitments; Misses a Transit Opportunity

Governor Lincoln Chafee, elected in 2010, entered office amidst a whirlwind of financial challenges facing Rhode Island. Given these fiscal issues, the governor remained steadfast in many commitments to the environment. The hard work of his staff, especially within the Department of Environmental Management (DEM), deserves high praise.

Governor Chafee has demonstrated a commitment to environmental issues by taking the simple, yet important, step of signing most of the conservation and environmental bills passed by the General Assembly. Highlights include a package of renewable energy bills, legal protection for conservation easements, and product stewardship for unused paint. Past governors allowed environmental policies to go into effect without a signature, demonstrating a lack of commitment.

After two years in office, Governor Chafee has proven to be an advocate for land and water conservation. He has introduced Question 5, a bond referendum on the November ballot, to fund upgrades in our wastewater and drinking water infrastructure. Question 6 is also before the voters. At a time when farmland protection in Rhode Island is critical, this bond referendum will continue its conservation, as well as open space protection and recreational development. **

Governor Chafee deserves commendation for his judicious use of veto power over dangerous environmental bills that came out of the General Assembly. He exercised this prerogative by vetoing a proposal to halt mandatory sewer tie-in in Warwick (H7936 / S2086); the General Assembly overrode his decision. This law allows cesspool owners in Warwick to defer tying in to existing sewer lines until they sell their homes. The continued existence and operation of cesspools threatens both our drinking water supplies and Narragansett Bay. He also vetoed H7942, which would have radically changed the structure and scope of the current Climate Change Commission. Enactment of this bill would have been a step back in our state's ability to

handle the impending threats of this serious global challenge. The governor included, in his 2012 budget, an increase in funding for Coastal Resources Management Council's (CRMC) legal capacity. This would have allowed the agency to meet National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) recommendations in order to receive federal funds for increased coastal planning and protection.

Though working to support and sign some positive environmental legislation, he has missed some critical opportunities to make progress through his budget proposals. For Rhode Island to properly protect its resources, take serious action on climate change, and invest in public transportation, Governor Chafee has work to do.

The governor, despite stating support for RIPTA, did not include the funding proposal found in the *Transit Investment and Debt Reduction Act* of 2012 (see

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Understanding the Report Card

The following pages contain the voting records and bill sponsor points that yield legislator grades. There were 14 priority issues that came to a vote on which ECRI took a position represented in the spreadsheets. A description of each of these bills is found on Page 7.

Not all bills on which ECRI took a position and the legislature came to a vote are included in the report card. Votes with the greatest environmental impact and votes that served to best distinguish legislators' voting records from one another were given priority. The ECRI bills that never came to a vote or are not included on the spreadsheet still factor into legislator grades in the assessment of bill sponsor points.

Sponsorship points have been extended to all named sponsors this year, as a method to develop accountability amongst legislators for issues to which their names are attached.

Environment Council of Rhode Island

2011 - 2012 Green Report Card

State Senate

		District	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Bill Points	Sponsor Points	Total	Grade
Dennis L	Algiere	38	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	o	+	+	+	-	+	+	64	0	64	C
David E	Bates	32	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	o	+	+	+	-	+	+	64	7	71	B
Frank A	Cicccone	7	-	+	+	+	+	+	o	+	+	+	o	+	o	o	57	0	57	D
Marc A	Cote	24	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	57	0	57	D
Elizabeth A	Crowley	16	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	o	+	+	+	-	+	+	64	1	65	C
Daniel	DaPonte	14	o	+	o	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	o	+	o	+	71	0	71	B
Frank A	DeVall	18	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	o	+	+	+	-	+	+	64	0	64	C
Louis P	DiPalma	12	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	o	+	+	+	-	+	+	64	9	73	B
James E	Doyle	8	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	o	+	+	-	o	+	57	0	57	D
Walter S	Felag	10	o	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	o	+	+	-	+	+	71	2	73	B
Paul W	Fogarty	23	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	4	75	B
Hanna M	Gallo	27	o	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	79	0	79	B
Maryellen	Goodwin	1	-	+	+	+	+	+	o	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	64	2	66	C
Dawson T	Hodgson	35	-	-	+	+	+	+	o	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	57	0	57	D
Paul V	Jabour	5	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	1	72	B
Nicholas D	Kettle	21	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	64	0	64	C
Beatrice A	Lanzi	26	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	0	71	B
Frank	Lombardo	25	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	o	-	o	+	50	0	50	F
Erin P	Lynch	31	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	o	+	+	+	-	+	+	64	-3	61	D
Francis T	Maher	34	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	57	0	57	D
Michael J	McCaffrey	29	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	-10	61	D
Harold M	Metts	6	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	1	72	B
Joshua	Miller	28	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	o	+	+	+	-	+	+	64	10	74	B
Bethany L	Moura	19	-	-	+	+	+	+	o	+	o	+	+	-	+	+	43	0	43	F
Donna	Nesselbush	15	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	1	72	B
Edward J	O'Neill	17	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	0	71	B
Christopher S	Ottiano	11	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	0	71	B
Teresa	Paiva Weed	13	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	5	76	B
Rhoda E	Perry	3	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	o	+	+	-	+	+	64	0	64	C
Roger A	Picard	20	-	+	+	+	+	+	o	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	64	1	65	C
Juan M	Pichardo	2	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	4	75	B
Michael J	Pinga	9	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	0	71	B
Dominick J	Ruggerio	4	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	o	+	64	5	69	C
James C	Sheehan	36	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	1	72	B
Glenford J	Shibley	33	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	57	0	57	D
Susan	Sosnowski	37	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	17	88	A
John J	Tassoni	22	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	1	72	B
William A	Walaska	30	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	6	77	B

See description of bills on page 7.

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State House of Representatives

		District	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Bill Points	Sponsor Points	Total	Grade
Edith H	Ajello	3	o	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	93	0	93	A
Samuel	Azzinaro	37	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	0	71	B
Lisa	Baldelli-Hunt	49	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	79	-1	78	B
David A	Bennett	20	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	100	1	101	A
Christopher R	Blazejewski	2	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	3	74	B
Jon	Brien	50	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	o	+	-	+	+	57	0	57	D
John	Carnevale	13	-	o	o	+	+	o	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	50	0	50	F
Michael W	Chippendale	40	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	57	1	58	D
Maria E	Cimini	7	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	100	1	101	A
Elaine	Coderre	60	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	0	71	B
Arthur	Corvese	55	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	0	71	B
Doreen M	Costa	31	-	o	-	-	+	+	-	-	+	-	+	-	+	+	0	0	0	F
Roberto	DaSilva	63	+	+	+	+	+	+	o	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	93	0	93	A
John J	DeSimone	5	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	o	+	64	0	64	C
Grace	Diaz	11	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	1	72	B
Spencer E	Dickinson	35	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	0	71	B
John	Edwards	70	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	64	-1	63	C
Laurence W	Ehrhardt	32	-	+	-	+	+	+	o	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	57	1	58	D
Deborah	Fellela	43	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	0	71	B
Frank	Ferri	22	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	86	4	90	A
Robert E	Flaherty	23	+	+	o	+	o	+	+	+	o	o	+	-	+	+	57	-1	56	D
Gordon D	Fox	4	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	0	71	B
Raymond E	Gallison	69	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	0	71	B
Daniel P	Gordon	71	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	o	+	+	-	+	+	14	0	14	F
Scott	Guthrie	28	o	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	1	72	B
Arthur	Handy	18	o	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	93	9	102	A
Joy	Hearn	66	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	0	71	B
Raymond A	Hull	6	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	86	0	86	A
Russell	Jackson	73	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	0	71	B
Robert B	Jacquard	17	o	o	o	o	+	+	+	+	+	o	+	-	+	+	50	0	50	F
Raymond	Johnson	61	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	0	71	B
Cale P	Keable	47	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	0	71	B
Brian P	Kennedy	38	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	1	72	B
Donald J	Lally	33	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	o	+	-	+	+	64	2	66	C
Charlene	Lima	14	+	o	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	79	0	79	B
Karen	MacBeth	52	-	o	o	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	o	+	36	0	36	F

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State House of Representatives

		District	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Bill Points	Sponsor Points	Total	Grade
Jan	Malik	67	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	o	+	-	+	+	64	0	64	C
Michael	Marcello	41	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	0	71	B
Peter F	Martin	75	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	4	75	B
Nicholas A	Mattiello,	15	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	0	71	B
John J	McCauley	1	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	o	+	64	0	64	C
James N	McLaughlin	57	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	0	71	B
Joseph M	McNamara	19	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	1	72	B
Leo	Medina	12	-	+	+	+	+	o	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	64	0	64	C
Helio	Melo	64	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	0	71	B
Rene R	Menard	45	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	0	71	B
Mary Duffy	Messier	62	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	86	1	87	A
Patricia	Morgan	26	-	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	50	0	50	F
Richard P	Morrison	68	-	+	+	+	+	o	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	64	0	64	C
Eileen S	Naughton	21	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	1	72	B
Brian	Newberry	48	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	43	0	43	F
Jared R	Nunes	25	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	79	0	79	B
Jeremiah T	O'Grady	46	-	+	+	+	+	o	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	64	3	67	C
Patrick	O'Neill	59	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	0	71	B
Peter G	Palumbo	16	o	+	+	+	+	o	+	+	o	+	+	-	+	+	64	0	64	C
Peter J	Petrarca	44	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	0	71	B
Robert D	Phillips	51	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	86	-1	85	A
Daniel P	Reilly	72	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	64	-1	63	C
Deborah	Ruggiero	74	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	86	13	99	A
William	SanBento	58	-	+	+	+	+	+	o	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	64	0	64	C
John	Savage	65	o	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	79	0	79	B
Gregory J	Schadone	54	-	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	64	0	64	C
Patricia	Serpa	27	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	0	71	B
Agostinho	Silva	56	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	0	71	B
Scott	Slater	10	-	+	o	+	+	+	+	+	o	+	+	-	+	+	57	3	60	D
Teresa A	Tanzi	34	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	86	4	90	A
Michael A	Tarro	8	-	+	o	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	64	0	64	C
Lisa P	Tomasso	29	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	0	71	B
Joseph A	Trillo	24	-	-	-	+	-	+	o	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	36	-1	35	F
Stephen R	Ucci	42	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	71	-1	70	C
Larry	Valencia	39	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	o	+	-	+	+	64	3	67	C
Donna M	Walsh	36	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	o	+	93	15	108	A
Robert A	Watson	30	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	+	-	+	-	o	+	-7	0	-7	F
Anastasia P	Williams	9	-	+	+	+	+	+	o	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	64	-1	63	C
Thomas	Winfield	53	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	o	+	-	+	+	64	0	64	C

Brief Description of Bills

- 1. Warwick Sewer Exemption, 2012** (S2086, H7936) A vote to exempt Warwick residents from mandatory sewer tie-ins that protect vital water resources from sewage overflow. A vote in favor was scored -. Bill passed notwithstanding Governor's veto.
- 2. Producer Responsibility For Paint, 2012** (S2083, H7233) A vote to develop a statewide plan for producer funded collection, recycling and resale of unused architectural paint. A vote in favor was scored +. Bill passed.
- 3. Complete Streets, 2012** (S2131, H7532) A vote to direct the Department of Transportation to apply Complete Streets design principals in future infrastructure projects in order to consider the needs of all users of roadways including pedestrians, bicyclists, public transportation riders, motorists and citizens of all ages when developing new projects. A vote in favor was scored +. Bill passed.
- 4. Petroleum Advisory Commission, 2012** (S2186, H7261) A vote to establish an advisory commission that would recommend policies to reduce the use of petroleum in Rhode Island through the use of alternative fuel sources and efficiency programs. A vote in favor was scored +. Bill passed.
- 5. Legal Protection for Conservation Easements, 2012** (S2224, H7171) A vote to clarify what parties could intervene in court actions that involve conservation easements to prevent misuse of this form of land conservation. A vote in favor was scored +. Bill passed.
- 6. School Siting, 2012** (S2277, H7412) A vote to ensure that public schools would not be placed on land where hazardous materials, vapors or gases may intrude into the building. to A vote in favor was scored +. Bill passed.
- 7. Renewable Energy Fund, 2011** (S187, H5281) A vote to extend the Renewable Energy Fund retroactively from 2008 until 2018. This will provide stability for renewable energy installers to finance different projects. A vote in favor was scored +. Bill passed.
- 8. Dam Removal, 2011** (S447, H5583) A vote to allow municipalities to work with the Clean Water Finance Agency in order to access low cost loans for financing dam removal and maintenance. A vote in favor was scored +. Bill passed.
- 9. Protection of Preservation and Conservation Easements, 2011** (S834, H5682) A vote to ensure that preservation and conservation easements are protected during all land sales including property mergers and tax delinquencies. A vote in favor was scored +. Bill passed.
- 10. Renewable Energy Coordinating Board, 2011** (S722, H5938) A vote to create the Renewable Energy Coordinating Board which would develop and recommend a strategic renewable energy implementation plan for Rhode Island. A vote in favor was scored +. Bill passed.
- 11. Statewide Interconnection Standards, 2011** (S721) A vote to allow developers and businesses to get costs for electrical materials for a potential project and help renewable energy developers that would like to create solar, wind, hydropower or other projects in the future. A vote in favor was scored +. Bill passed.
- 12. Out-of-State Construction Debris as Landfill Cover, 2011** (S454) A vote to allow other states' construction and demolition debris to be used as daily cover at the landfill. This debris can contain material such as gypsum board which contributes to odor development. A vote in favor was scored -. Bill passed.
- 13. Net Metering, 2011** (S457, H5939) A vote to expand net metering to all forms of renewable energy, which does not include landfill gas. A vote in favor was scored +. Bill passed.
- 14. Distributed Renewable Energy Standard Contract** (S723) A vote to create a standard contract for local business to finance and construct renewable energy projects. This provides for projects of any size to quickly and easily enter into contracts to sell Renewable Energy Credits at a fixed price for 20 years. A vote in favor was scored +. Bill passed.

Key to the Grades

- + = Voted for the ECRI position o = Absent
- = Voted against the ECRI position

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legislative review, page 2 for details). RIPTA supports our economy. It gets people to work, reduces the need for a family to own multiple vehicles, and provides mobility for those who do not drive. Funding for public transportation is an essential environmental issue. Rhode Island's largest and fastest growing source of greenhouse gas emissions is the transportation sector. The most important method of reducing these emissions is to expand and improve public transit. This has been and will continue to be an ECRI priority.

In this time when our government is facing challenging financial questions, it is essential that DEM is supported with sufficient resources to accomplish its duties. DEM cannot afford another workforce reduction, especially in its enforcement and permitting departments. Continued attrition within the DEM will severely slow the regulatory process and hamper the state from carrying out its duties to protect our right to clean air and clean water. These strains also threaten DEM's ability to properly protect our public lands and most valuable assets: open

spaces, forests, and beaches. Most important, a withering DEM is the major roadblock to preventing the state from taking serious action against climate change.

Overall, Governor Chafee has continued to support the protection of our waterways and open spaces. Like the General Assembly, the governor had to confront a firestorm of challenges during the 2011-2012 legislative session. ECRI applauds the direction and leadership of DEM's staff. During these trying times, the environmental community seeks a more open door in order to provide necessary council on how Rhode Island protects its environment and encourages sustainable economic development. ECRI and allied organizations have an invaluable perspective on how the environment is inextricably linked to our economy through the protection of our health and open spaces.

The Rating System

Rating systems cannot adequately account for work that goes on behind the scenes at the legislature. Good bills are often defeated in committee or through procedural maneuvers that do not result in floor votes that can be counted. By the same token, bad bills are often defeated the same way. Counting only votes on the floor of the Assembly, therefore, would fail to capture the true contribution of individual legislators to the outcome of environmental legislation. In an attempt to allocate credit more accurately, we include not only floor votes, but also sponsorship of bills, both good and bad, in our tally.

For the floor votes included in the tally, individual legislators are graded based on the percentage of times they voted with or against the ECRI position. In the House and Senate for the 2011-2012 session, we counted 14 priority issue votes. A legislator who votes with the ECRI position on every issue would receive 100 points. Voting against the ECRI position lost points, while absences resulted in no points being awarded.

Principal sponsorship of environmental bills earns an additional +3 points (good for the environment and passed), +2 (good for the environment but did not pass). Named sponsorship on all good bills got an additional +1. Principal Sponsorship of bad bills got -3 (bad for the environment and passed), -2 (bad for the environment but did not pass). Named sponsorship on bad bills received a -1. Sponsorship points were awarded for bills listed on ECRI's legislative agenda.

We recognize that leadership in both the House and Senate plays a role far beyond their individual votes in setting the tone for and against environmental protection. Although leadership control cannot be as objectively measured as the votes, it is useful to remember that leadership should be held responsible for the overall tone of the session on environmental matters.

Legislative Review

(Continued from page 2)

Grant, a report entitled “A Starting Point” was drafted and submitted to the legislative leadership by the Commission for review.

Passage of a bill (H7942) at the close of the 2012 session, which would have changed the climate commission, caught ECRI and commission members by surprise. Governor Chafee vetoed the bill in response to the outcry that changes should be made only after the public had an opportunity to evaluate the work of the commission and to provide input on any changes. The question of how to organize and support the work of the commission and the State's response to the issue of climate change is important to ECRI. Our member groups will continue to work to support and shape both the work of the commission and Rhode Island's response to this wide-ranging issue.

Supporting our Bond Initiatives

This November, Rhode Island voters will have the opportunity to vote on two critical ballot measures which were included in the budget passed in 2012. Question 5 will fund wastewater and drinking water infrastructure by providing a match for federal funds that will be available for needed projects for the cities and towns. Question 6 continues funding farmland and open space protection, habitat restoration and stormwater management. Many Council member groups are actively campaigning for passage of these critical bond measures to continue investing in Rhode Island's environment.



Find Your Elected Officials

On the Secretary of State's website, you can check your voter registration, find your current elected officials, and view sample ballots for upcoming elections.

Check out:
www.sos.ri.gov/vic

Tying Rhode Island's Environment to the Economy

Environmental protection is the lynchpin to any robust and sustainable economy. Too often it is perceived as an impediment to economic growth, but this perception is not fact. We call on you, Governor Chafee, to diminish this misconception of inherent conflict between a strong economy and a healthy environment by leading the state in a conversation about the role a well-protected environment plays in the State's economy.

- **Tricia Jedele**, ECRI President, in Letter to Gov. Chafee, Oct. 12, 2011

In September 2012, the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council (RIPEC) proposed a radical restructuring of the entire state government, “to facilitate and coordinate broader economic development activities across a number of entities involved in economic development across the state.” This recommendation included making the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) a subsidiary of a Secretariat of Commerce.

This Secretary of Commerce is tasked with aligning commerce-related functions of different executive agencies. While improving the economy is a laudable goal, the assumption that DEM's primary task is “commerce-related” misses the point. DEM exists to protect our environment and enforce environmental laws. This attempt to align environmental protection with other commerce-related agencies twists DEM's reason for existence.

We need to view our economy as more than unemployment numbers, GDP growth and stock market prices. The economy is a measure of how well our society functions. It includes important quality-of-life questions, such as, “is the school bus giving my kid asthma,” “is this bottle safe for my baby to drink from,” “is the bay safe to swim in,” “was my food exposed to contamination” or “will my kids ever see the snow fall in Rhode Island.”

Our economy includes the health of small business and the availability of credit to build commercial infrastructure. Let's not forget the value of our environment in this equation.

**Environment Council of Rhode Island
PO Box 9061
Providence RI 02940**

**p: (401) 621-8048
www.environmentcouncilri.org**

The Environment Council of Rhode Island is a coalition of 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.