

2020 EMERGING LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL OF RHODE ISLAND (ECRI)



ENERGY & CLIMATE

The Issue: The harmful impacts of climate change, including sea level rise, heat waves, extreme weather, and more, are devastating Rhode Island. Meanwhile, our state's economy relies on out-of-state fossil fuels and outdated electric and gas distribution systems to supply our energy needs. If we are to stave off the worst impact of climate change, Rhode Island's General Assembly must take immediate action on the climate crisis.

The Solutions:

- **Update the Resilient Rhode Island Act** to make Rhode Island's greenhouse gas emissions reductions targets consistent with current science and mandatory across state government.
- **Update appliance efficiency standards** to save residents and businesses on their water, gas, and electricity bills while reducing water and energy waste.
- **Increase the Renewable Energy Standard to 100% by 2030.** Let's stop buying electricity from out-of-state fossil fuel sources and instead invest in local renewable sources, like solar and wind.
- **Oppose attempts to allow dirty pyrolysis (gasification) electricity generation.** Allowing waste-to-gas electricity generation would create pollution while failing to solve Rhode Island's waste problems.
- **Provide grants to cities and towns for climate resiliency through the Ocean State Climate Adaptation and Resilience (OSCAR) fund,** generated from a 5 cents per barrel fee on petroleum imported by ship.
- **Update the Energy Facilities Siting Act** to require adherence to the Resilient Rhode Island Act, include a public advocate, and consider environmental justice.



FUNDING & INVESTMENT

The Issue: For years, Rhode Island voters have overwhelmingly approved bonds to fund conservation efforts. Yet budgets are declining for Department of Environmental Management, the Coastal Resource Management Council, and other key environmental programs. For the sake of our public health and economy, our natural resources desperately need sustained, protected sources of funding.

The Solutions:

- **Put a Green Bond on the ballot** that will fund protection of Rhode Island's priority open spaces, working farms, forests and critical wildlife habitat; complete the state's network of bike paths; and help communities improve their climate resiliency.
- **Prevent caps on energy efficiency programs.** Don't limit the investments made through Rhode Island's cost-effective, nation-leading energy efficiency programs. These programs reduce carbon pollution, increase energy reliability, and save Rhode Islanders on their utility bills.
- **Ensure that the Department of Environmental Management and Coastal Resource Management Council are full funded.**

The Environment Council of Rhode Island (ECRI) is a coalition of over 60 Rhode Island organizations that advocate for policies and laws to protect and enhance the environment. **For more information on ECRI, please visit www.environmentcouncilri.org or contact environmentcouncil@earthlink.net.**



WASTE

The Issue: Single-use plastics, like bags and take out containers, litter our neighborhoods, contaminate marine environments, and jam the gears at the state recycling facilities—among dozens of other issues. Several Rhode Island communities have passed ordinances banning plastic products, most notably plastic bags. It's time to take up this issue statewide.

The Solutions:

- **Support bills that will ban single-use plastic bags, reduce plastic straw use, reduce balloon litter, and otherwise reduce the creation and flow of plastic.**



WATER & TOXICS

The Issue: Rhode Islanders have a right to safe, affordable drinking water, clean rivers, and a healthy ocean. However, unregulated toxic chemicals threaten our water supply. Known toxic chemicals are also found in our homes, workplaces, and everyday products. The General Assembly must develop strong policy that will support infrastructure to protect our water supply and reduce toxics.

The Solutions

- **Set standards for PFAS in water.** Require health-based regulatory standards for toxic PFAS forever chemicals in drinking water and groundwater.
- **Fill vacancies on the Water Resources Board and Rhode Island Rivers Council.** Without qualified environmental leaders, these statutory bodies can't do their job protecting our clean water.
- **Oppose rollbacks of water protections, like the cesspool phase-out law passed in 2015.**
- **Ban PFAS in food packaging.** PFAS are man-made chemicals that can lead to adverse human health effects, yet are found in many products, including 40% of takeout containers.
- **Require disclosure of ingredients in personal care products** because Rhode Islanders have a right to know what potentially toxic substances are in the products we use in our homes.



OTHER EMERGING PRIORITIES

A myriad of other environmental issues affect Rhode Islanders every day. Strong policies and programs will protect our communities and natural resources long into the future.

- **Implement the regional Transportation and Climate Initiative** to invest in clean, accessible, modern transportation options.
- **Protect bike and pedestrian safety.** Biking and walking are the greenest, healthiest ways to get around, yet Rhode Islanders don't have safe ways to move around our cities and towns.
- **Increase investment into climate literacy and environmental education** to build strong, knowledgeable environmental leaders for generations to come.

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