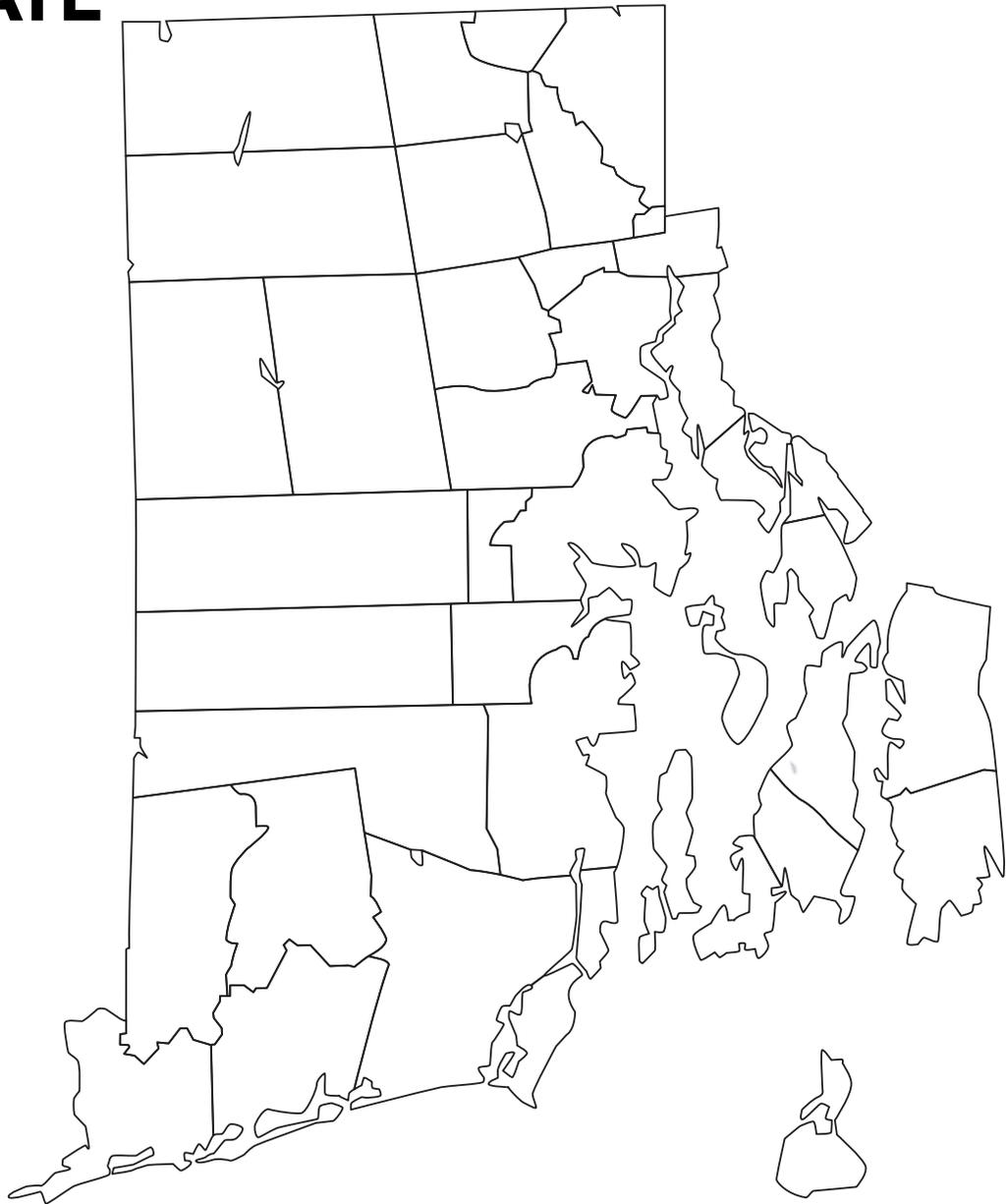


# A GUIDE TO RHODE ISLAND GOVERNMENT & HISTORY



**Nellie M. Gorbea**  
Secretary of State

# OUR STATE



**What city or town do you live in?**

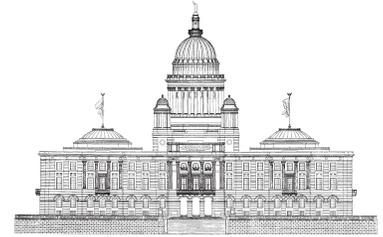
**Can you identify each city and town on the map?**

Barrington  
Bristol  
Burrillville  
Central Falls  
Charlestown  
Coventry  
Cranston  
Cumberland  
East Greenwich  
East Providence

Exeter  
Foster  
Glocester  
Hopkinton  
Jamestown  
Johnston  
Lincoln  
Little Compton  
Middletown  
Narragansett

New Shoreham (Block Island)  
Newport  
North Kingstown  
North Providence  
North Smithfield  
Pawtucket  
Portsmouth  
Providence  
Richmond  
Scituate

Smithfield  
South Kingstown  
Tiverton  
Warren  
Warwick  
West Greenwich  
West Warwick  
Westerly  
Woonsocket



As Secretary of State, I want all Rhode Islanders to know about our amazing state and to understand how our government works. This book has information about Rhode Island, our State House, and our government. I know you will enjoy learning about our state’s rich history and its important contributions to the growth and prosperity of the United States of America.

I encourage you to visit our magnificent State House where you can see the treasures described in this book, and learn even more about how our state government works. Visit the rooms where laws are made and learn more about how you can have a voice in decisions that affect you. We offer free guided tours every weekday, except holidays. To schedule a tour call us at (401) 222-3983 or email us at [tours@sos.ri.gov](mailto:tours@sos.ri.gov).

You can also learn more about Rhode Island and our State House by visiting our website at [sos.ri.gov](http://sos.ri.gov). There you will find lots of historic documents, virtual exhibits, and other information, all available 24 hours a day.

I hope you will love learning about our state and its fascinating history as much as I do. It makes me proud to call Rhode Island my home.

Sincerely,

Nellie M. Gorbea  
Secretary of State

Rhode Island  
Department of State

Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

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SOURCES  
[www.discoveryeducation.com](http://www.discoveryeducation.com)  
Rhode Island State Library  
Rhode Island State Archives

Special thanks to Tim Howe from Tolman High School, and his students, Charlize Lopez and Kaela Stefanik, for proposing incorporating math problems into this book.



# RHODE ISLAND ORIGINS OF ITS NAME



Giovanni da Verrazzano

Rhode Island's official state name is the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. Where did these two parts of our state's name come from?

The first use of "Rhode Island" or any of its variations in connection with Narragansett Bay is in a letter from Italian explorer Giovanni da Verrazzano dated July 8, 1524. In the letter he refers to an island near

the mouth of Narragansett Bay, noting its similarity to the Isle of Rhodes in the Aegean Sea.

The phrase "Providence Plantations" comes from a 1643 Parliamentary Patent, the first official document that united the towns Providence, Portsmouth, and Newport. England's Commission on Foreign Plantations granted the patent and named the towns:

"the Incorporation of Providence Plantations in Narragansett Bay in New England." At that time, "plantations" were places where colonists established farms and grew crops.

The 1663 Royal Charter united the two earlier descriptive names, officially naming the territory the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations.

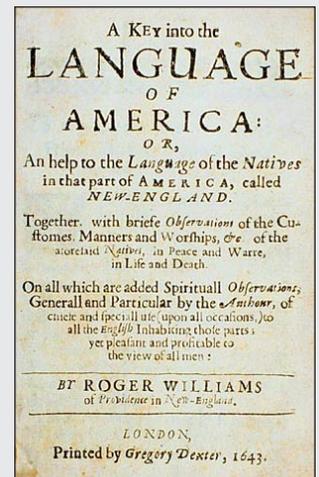
## THE FIRST RHODE ISLANDERS

Rhode Island's earliest inhabitants were members of the Narragansett, Wampanoag, Nipmuc, and Pequot tribes. For thousands of years, they fished, hunted, and grew crops throughout the land we call Rhode Island. They lived in extended family groups and did not establish permanent settlements, moving inland from the coast during the colder months, never exhausting the land or its resources.

Beginning in 1620, colonial settlers from Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies came to the region to trade with the indigenous people. In 1635, William Blackstone became the first European settler to build a permanent home in present-day Rhode Island. It was on the banks of a river now named after him, the Blackstone River, in Cumberland

## FunFact!

When Roger Williams arrived in New England, he learned the language of the indigenous people. In 1643, he wrote *A Key into the Language of America* which includes translations of Native American words to English.



Indigenous people continue to live throughout Rhode Island, and we use many of their words in our everyday life. Here are three words with their original meanings:

<b>Narragansett</b>	<b>Wampanoag</b>	<b>Aquidneck</b>
<i>People of the small point of land.</i>	<i>People of the first light.</i>	<i>At the island.</i>

### Do any of these words look familiar?

Sakonnet	Pawtucket	Metacom
Touisset	Ninigret	Quonset
Kickemuit	Massasoit	Wamsutta

### Can you add to this list?

# COLONIAL HISTORY

Roger Williams founded the first permanent colonial settlement in Rhode Island in 1636, on land granted to him by Narragansett chiefs Canonicus and Miantonomi. He named the settlement Providence.

Banished from Massachusetts for speaking out about religious tolerance, Williams established a policy of religious freedom in Providence. Other leaders advocating freedom of worship soon established similar communities around Narragansett Bay.

Over the next few decades, thousands of settlers came to Rhode Island. In 1675, the tension created by their growing need for land led to war. King Philip's War, named for Wampanoag leader Metacomet



who was also known as Philip, lasted only 14 months, but it permanently changed Rhode Island. Thousands of indigenous people were killed. Survivors fled or were captured and sold into slavery.

In the 1700s, Rhode Island became a major participant in the trans-Atlantic maritime trade which included the enslavement of Africans. African heritage people, both enslaved and free,

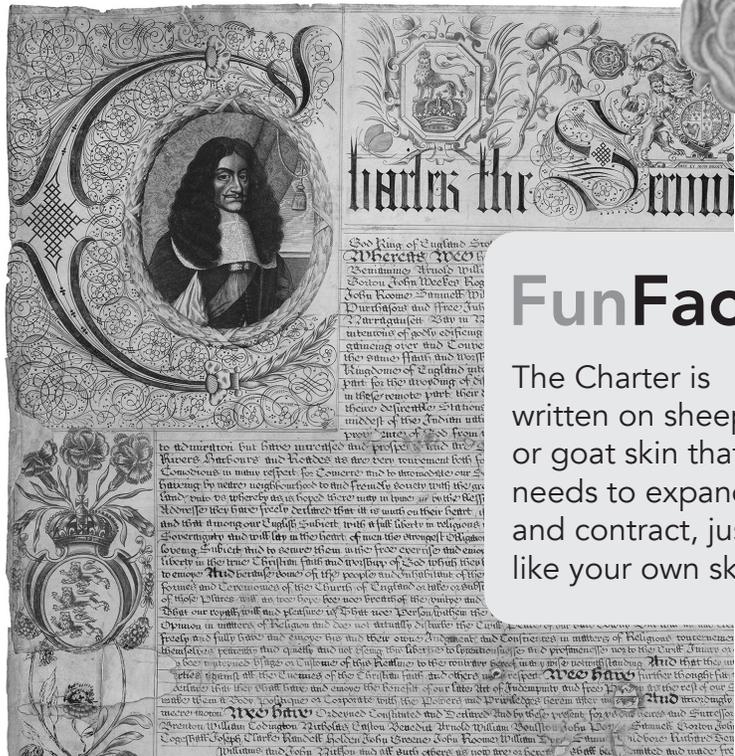
were a significant portion of the population in the urban seaports of Newport, Providence, and Bristol, and on the working farms of western Rhode Island.

The colonial period came to an end in 1776. Rhode Island was the first colony to renounce its allegiance to the king on May 4th of that year. The Declaration of Independence followed exactly two months later.

## ROYAL CHARTER

The Royal Charter of 1663 guaranteed Rhode Island settlers freedom of religion and the freedom to govern their own colony. Rhode Island was the first colony in New England to be granted these freedoms by King Charles II of England.

The Charter is in the care of the Secretary of State, who has been the keeper of records since the colonial period. It is on display in the Royal Charter Museum located in the Rhode Island State House. Alongside the Charter are other documents and artifacts that tell the story of Rhode Island's colonial settlement and represent its important place in history.



### FunFact

The Charter is written on sheep or goat skin that needs to expand and contract, just like your own skin.

# HISTORIC HIGHLIGHTS

1600

**1636**  
Narragansett chiefs Canonicus and Miantonomi grant Roger Williams the land which becomes Providence.



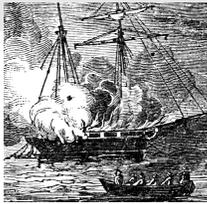
**1638**  
Anne Hutchinson is expelled from Massachusetts and helps found Pocasset (Portsmouth).

**1640**  
Newport establishes a Common Burying Ground for all residents regardless of race or religion.



**1663**  
The Royal Charter guarantees Rhode Islanders the right to freedom of religion and to govern themselves.

1700



**1772**  
In the first armed act of rebellion against England, Rhode Islanders attack and burn the British ship *Gaspee*.

**1774**  
Providence citizens are the first to propose the idea of a Continental Congress at their town meeting.



**1776**  
Rhode Island is the first colony to repeal its allegiance to the British Crown.

**1778**  
The 1st Rhode Island Regiment, comprised of African American and Native American men, participates in the Battle of Rhode Island.

1800



**1841-1842**  
The Dorr Rebellion leads to the expansion of voting rights to citizens who don't own land.

**1853**  
Rhode Island firm Brown & Sharpe standardizes measurement tools, revolutionizing mass production.



**1885**  
Reverend Mahlon van Horne is the first African American man to be elected to the General Assembly.

1900



**1917**  
Rhode Island is the first New England state to allow women to vote for Presidential Electors.

**1936**  
Rhode Island is the first state in the nation to use voting machines in every voting district in the state.



**1994**  
The first WaterFire lighting is made possible by a complete redesign of Providence which includes uncovering long buried rivers.

2000



**2016**  
America's first offshore windfarm is built off the coast of Block Island.

How will you contribute to Rhode Island's future?

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# WOMEN IN OUR HISTORY



**Elizabeth Buffum Chace Memorial (1806–1899)**  
Elizabeth Buffum Chace fought to end slavery and was a co-founder of the Rhode Island Women’s Suffrage Association. She also believed in the value of education, helping to create a state school for homeless children.



**Christiana Carteaux Bannister Memorial (1822–1902)**  
Cristiana Carteaux Bannister was an entrepreneur, equal rights activist, and supporter of the arts. She founded the Home for Aged Colored Women which is known as Bannister House today.

## FAMOUS FIRST

The first strike in the United States that women participated in occurred in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, in 1824.

*Christiana Carteaux Bannister and Elizabeth Buffum Chace are the first two women to have portrait busts in the Rhode Island State House.*

# WOMEN ELECTED TO OFFICE



## FAMOUS FIRST

Forty-six years before women were permitted to vote, Anna E. Aldrich, Elizabeth C. Hicks, and Abby J. Slocum took advantage of a provision in the state’s constitution that allowed “non-electors” to

serve on school committees and ran for office. Each was elected to the Providence School Committee, setting a precedent for women in public office in Rhode Island.



**First Representative in the General Assembly, 1923**  
Isabelle Ahearn O’Neill (D)



**First Attorney General, 1985**  
Arlene Violet (R)



**First Senate President, 2008**  
M. Teresa Paiva Weed (D)



**First Senator in the General Assembly, 1929**  
Lulu Mowry Schlesinger (R)



**First General Treasurer, 1993**  
Nancy J. Mayer (R)



**First Hispanic in a statewide office (Secretary of State), 2015**  
Nellie M. Gorbea (D)



**First Representative in Congress, 1981**  
Claudine Schneider (R)



**First Lieutenant Governor, 2007**  
Elizabeth H. Roberts (D)



**First Governor, 2015**  
Gina M. Raimondo (D)



**First Secretary of State, 1983**  
Susan L. Farmer (R)

## FAMOUS FIRST

Newport resident Ann Smith Franklin, Benjamin Franklin’s sister-in-law, became the country’s first female newspaper editor in 1762.

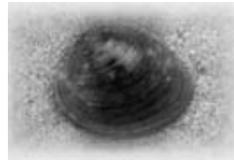
# STATE SYMBOLS



## STATE BIRD

### Rhode Island Red

Adopted on May 3, 1954.  
Rhode Island Reds lay up to 300 brown eggs a year.



## STATE SHELL

### Quahog

Adopted on June 30, 1987.  
Quahog shells were shaped into beads and used as currency in the 1600s and 1700s.



## STATE FLOWER

### Violet

Adopted on March 11, 1968.  
Violets are often purple and bloom in the spring.



## STATE FISH

### The Striped Bass

Adopted on July 13, 2000.  
Striped Bass average 20-30 inches and can live 30 years or more.



## STATE MINERAL

### Bowenite

Adopted on May 26, 1966.  
Bowenite, found in northern Rhode Island, is a relative of jade.



## STATE DRINK

### Coffee Milk

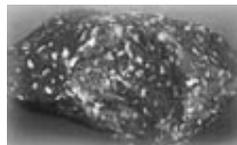
Adopted on July 29, 1993.  
Coffee milk mixed with vanilla ice cream is called a "cabinet."



## STATE TREE

### Red Maple

Adopted on March 6, 1964.  
Red Maple leaves turn gold, purple, and red in the fall.



## STATE ROCK

### Cumberlandite

Adopted on May 6, 1966.  
Cumberlandite is a dark rock with white markings found throughout the state.



## STATE FRUIT

### Greening Apple

Adopted on June 20, 1992.  
Developed in Rhode Island around 1796, Greening Apples retain their sharp taste in cooking.



## STATE MARINE MAMMAL

### Harbor Seal

Adopted on July 14, 2016.  
Harbor Seals can grow to six feet and weigh over 200 pounds.



## STATE INSECT

### American Burying Beetle

Adopted on July 14, 2015.  
American Burying Beetles are on the federal Endangered Species List.



STATE \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have an idea for something that represents our state? Draw it here.

# RHODE ISLAND LEADING THE WAY

## First diner!

Walter Scott is credited with opening the first diner in America in 1872. His diner was a horse-drawn wagon with windows along the side from which he sold food to *Providence Journal* employees.

## First water-powered factory!

In 1790, Samuel Slater partnered with Moses Brown to design the first water-powered textile mill in America. Three years later he built Slater Mill in Pawtucket which you can still visit today.

## First gas-illuminated street lights!

Pelham Street in Newport was the first street in America to be lit with gas lights!



## First off-shore wind farm!

In 2016, America's first ocean-based wind farm was built off the coast of Block Island.

# GEOGRAPHY

**Area:** 1,214 square miles (land & water).

**Greatest Distances:** North to South - 48 miles; East to West 37 miles.

**Elevation:** Highest - Jerimoth Hill in Foster (812 feet); lowest - sea level along Atlantic coast.

**Coastline:** Over 400 miles

**Climate:** Average January temp. 30° Fahrenheit, 1° Celsius. Average July temp. 72° Fahrenheit, 22° Celsius.

**Yearly Precipitation:** 44 inches average.

**Population Density:** Rhode Island is the second most densely populated state, after New Jersey.

**Islands:** The state's many islands include Aquidneck, Conanicut, Block, Prudence, Dutch, and Hog.

# RHODE ISLAND STATE HOUSE

The Rhode Island State House was built between 1895 and 1904; it took nine years to build and is over 100 years old! It is made of white Georgia marble. The design for the building was done by McKim, Mead & White. The State House dome is the fourth largest self-supported marble dome in the WORLD!

The three larger ones are:

St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, Italy; the Minnesota State Capitol; and the Taj Mahal in India.

The State House is home to the Executive and Legislative Branches of Rhode Island's government. People who work here include: the Governor; the Lieutenant Governor; the Secretary of State; the General Treasurer; senators; and representatives.

## FunFact!

Before the present State House was built, Rhode Island had five State Houses that were located in different towns in Rhode Island. Legislators held sessions in each State House at different times of the year. In an era before cars, this ensured that government was available to the people. The early State Houses were in Providence, Newport, Bristol, East Greenwich, and South Kingstown. You can still visit them today!



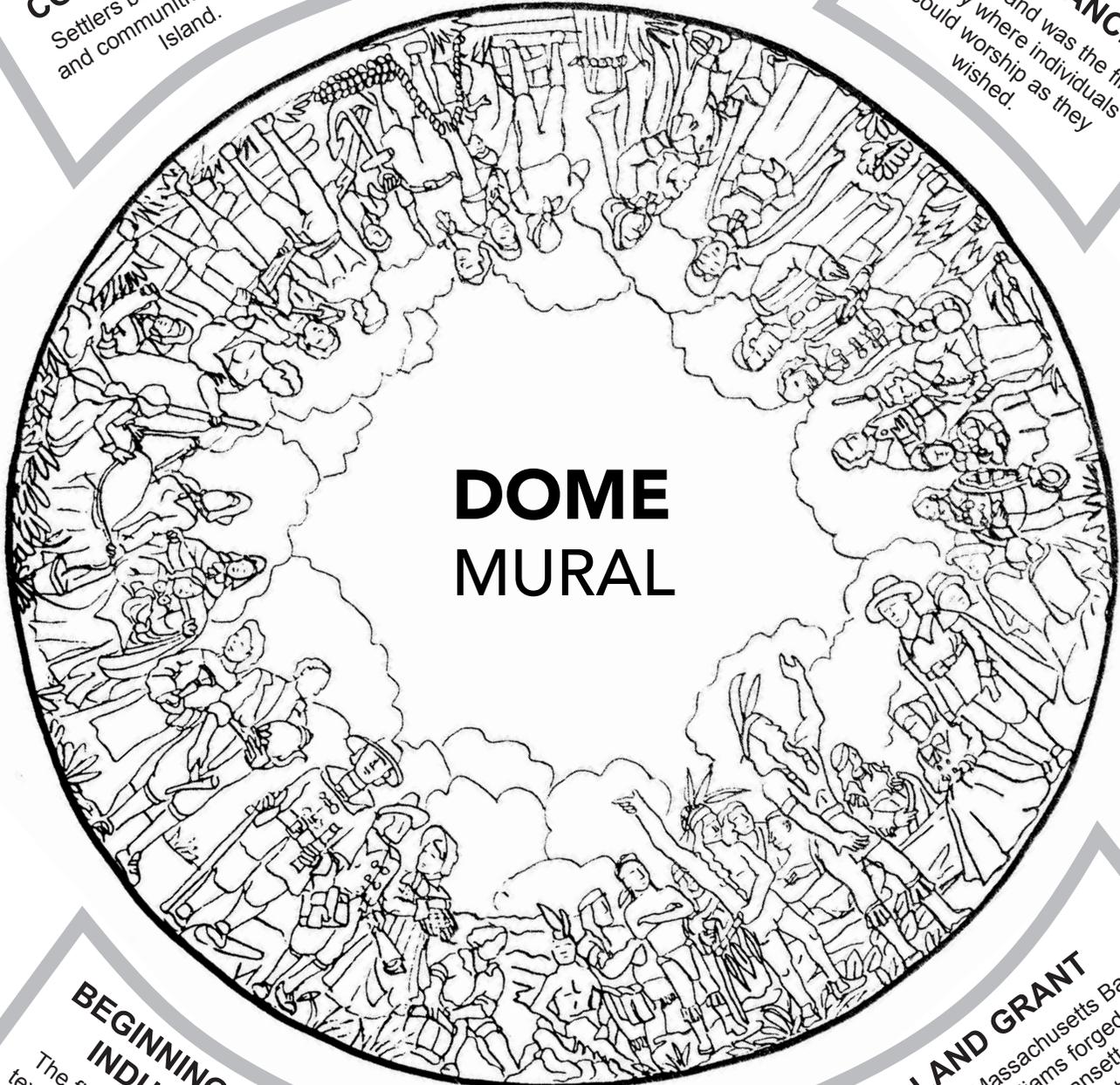
**The State House is the people's house; it belongs to all Rhode Islanders.**

**PIONEERING AND THE ORIGINS OF CONSTRUCTION**

Settlers built new homes and communities in Rhode Island.

**RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE**

Rhode Island was the first colony where individuals could worship as they wished.



**DOME MURAL**

**BEGINNINGS OF INDUSTRY**

The first water-powered textile mill in America was built in Pawtucket, Rhode Island in 1793.

**THE LAND GRANT**

Forced to flee Massachusetts Bay Colony, Roger Williams forged an agreement with Narragansett chiefs Canonicus and Miantonomi to settle in present-day Providence.

The State House dome has a large mural designed by Rhode Island artist James Allen King. It shows four important Rhode Island scenes. The mural was painted by artists George DeFelice, Robert C. Haun, and Victor Zucchi.

# INDEPENDENT MAN

He stands 235 feet above the street, weighs over 500 pounds, and is made of gilded bronze. He is eleven feet tall from head to toe, and 14 feet tall from his toes to the tip of his spear. First placed on top of the State House on December 18, 1899, he has only been taken down once for repairs and new gold leaf on August 9, 1975, and was returned on July 20, 1976.

Originally titled "Hope" by sculptor George Brewster,

the figure on top of the State House was nick-named "The Independent Man" by the Providence Journal shortly after it was installed. Given Rhode Island's proud, independent spirit, the new name stuck and the sculpture has been known as The Independent Man ever since. Standing watch over our state capitol, the figure reminds Rhode Islanders the importance of standing up for their beliefs.



**FunFact!** The Independent Man has been struck by lightning at least 27 times!

# STATE SEAL

The State Seal has the official state name, symbol, and motto of Rhode Island. The full name of our state is the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. The symbol is the anchor, and the motto is "Hope." One reason we use this motto is because the word is found in a famous quote from our state's founder, Roger Williams, who told the early settlers to have "Hope in the Divine." The anchor also reminds us of water. A garland of leaves surrounds the shield which bears the anchor. Written around the seal are the words: "Seal of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations 1636." A great place to see the State Seal is in the Rhode Island State House rotunda.



## FunFact!

Legislators have proposed removing "Providence Plantations" from the state name at least five times. In 2010, the question of removal was put on the ballot, however 78% of Rhode Island voters chose not to change the name. The question will be on the ballot again in 2020.

## STATE ROOM



The State Room is the formal entrance to the Governor's office. The Governor leads the Executive Branch of Rhode Island's government. The State Room is also used for press conferences, meetings, and ceremonies.

The State Room has several paintings of important figures in United States and Rhode Island history. The portrait of George Washington was painted by Gilbert Stuart, a Rhode Island artist who painted many of our founding fathers. Facing George Washington is General Nathanael Greene, a Rhode Islander who was one of the most important generals during the Revolutionary War.

**FunFact!** The portrait of George Washington has an interesting illusion: when you walk across the room, George Washington's eyes and toe always seem to be pointed in your direction!

## STATE LIBRARY



The State Library is a magnificent three-story room that contains books about United States and Rhode Island history and government. The Library was created for the General Assembly but is open to the public. Historians, lawmakers, and even students come here to research Rhode Island history. The Secretary of State is in charge of the State Library.

The Library has a beautiful ceiling that was designed to look like the back of a leather-bound book. Among its gold decorations are 16 circular seals; these are printers' marks, or logos, from the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. The Library also has stairs and catwalks to access the books on the upper stories. These look like they're made out of wood, but are actually iron painted to resemble wood.

The oldest book in the Library is from 1750 and contains records of Rhode Island's government when it was still a colony of England. The Library also has the official record from May 4, 1776, when Rhode Island's General Assembly renounced the colony's allegiance to King George III of England.

**FunFact!** The Library has Rhode Island's souvenir from the Apollo 11 space mission: a Rhode Island flag that was flown to the moon and some moon rocks!

# GENERAL ASSEMBLY

## SENATE CHAMBER



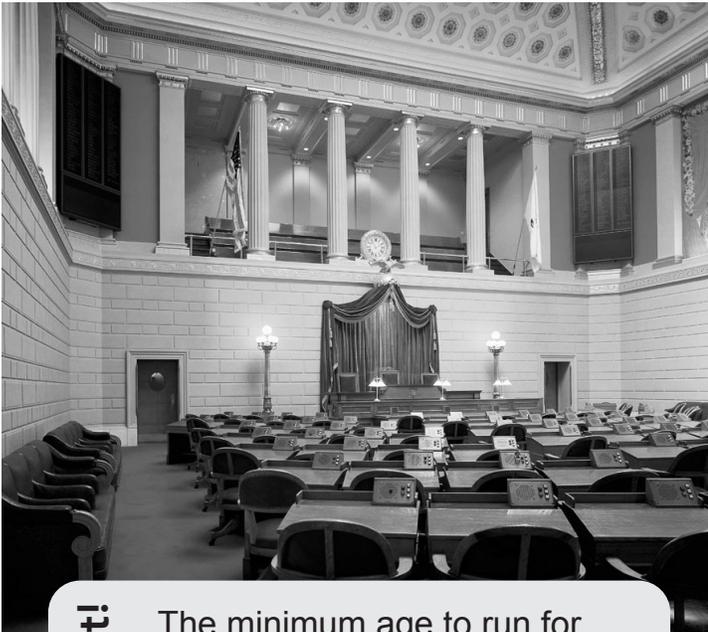
The Senate and the House of Representatives make up Rhode Island's General Assembly. The General Assembly is the legislative branch of our state government. Senators and Representatives are elected by Rhode Islanders to represent them and they make laws that affect all Rhode Islanders. The General Assembly session begins the first Tuesday in January and usually ends in June. The General Assembly holds sessions Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday afternoons.

The House and Senate chambers have desks for each lawmaker. The desks have computers for legislators to review bills, and buttons that they use to vote "yes" or "no" on bills. Each room also has large, electronic tally boards with the names of each legislator. When they vote on a bill, their "yes" or "no" votes are shown on the boards so that everyone knows how each person voted.

The large desk at the front of the room is called the rostrum. The center of the rostrum is reserved for the leader of the Senate, called the Senate President, or the leader of the House of Representatives, known as the Speaker of the House of Representatives. These are the highest positions in each chamber of the General Assembly.

High above the Senate and House chambers is a special area called the gallery. The gallery allows the public to watch meetings of the General Assembly. You don't need an invitation to sit in the gallery and it's a great way to learn how laws are made!

## HOUSE CHAMBER



**FunFact!**

The minimum age to run for town or state office in Rhode Island is 18! How soon could you run for office?

## GENERAL ASSEMBLY FACTS

38 Senators

75 Representatives

**WHO IS YOUR SENATOR?**

**WHO IS YOUR REPRESENTATIVE?**

# RHODE ISLAND ELECTED OFFICIALS

## CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION



Jack Reed  
U.S. SENATOR



Sheldon Whitehouse  
U.S. SENATOR



David Cicilline  
U.S. REPRESENTATIVE  
(DISTRICT 1)



James Langevin  
U.S. REPRESENTATIVE  
(DISTRICT 2)

## GENERAL OFFICERS



Gina Raimondo  
GOVERNOR



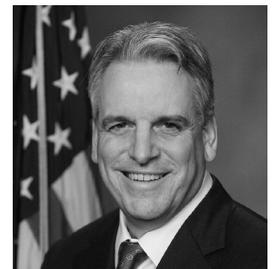
Daniel McKee  
LT. GOVERNOR



Nellie M. Gorbea  
SECRETARY OF STATE



Seth Magaziner  
GENERAL TREASURER



Peter F. Neronha  
ATTORNEY GENERAL

## SENATE PRESIDENT AND HOUSE SPEAKER



Dominick J. Ruggerio  
SENATE PRESIDENT



Nicholas Mattiello  
SPEAKER OF THE  
HOUSE

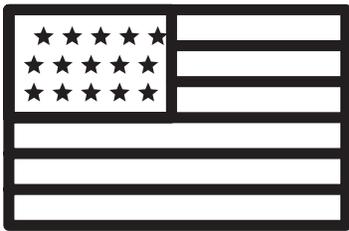
Do you want to learn more about your government officials?

For more information about the people who represent you in federal and state government, visit our Voter Information Center at

[www.vote.ri.gov](http://www.vote.ri.gov)

# GOVERNMENT BRANCHES

The US Constitution defines the structure and responsibilities of the federal government. The federal government consists of three branches: Executive, Legislative, and Judicial. Each of these branches has a specific responsibility, none more important than the other. By giving each branch an equal role, the framers of the Constitution tried to ensure that no single branch of government would become too powerful. This system is commonly called “checks and balances.” Rhode Island’s state government has a similar structure and division of responsibilities.



The Executive Branch is led by the **President** and is responsible for implementing laws.

The Legislative Branch, otherwise known as **Congress**, is responsible for making laws.

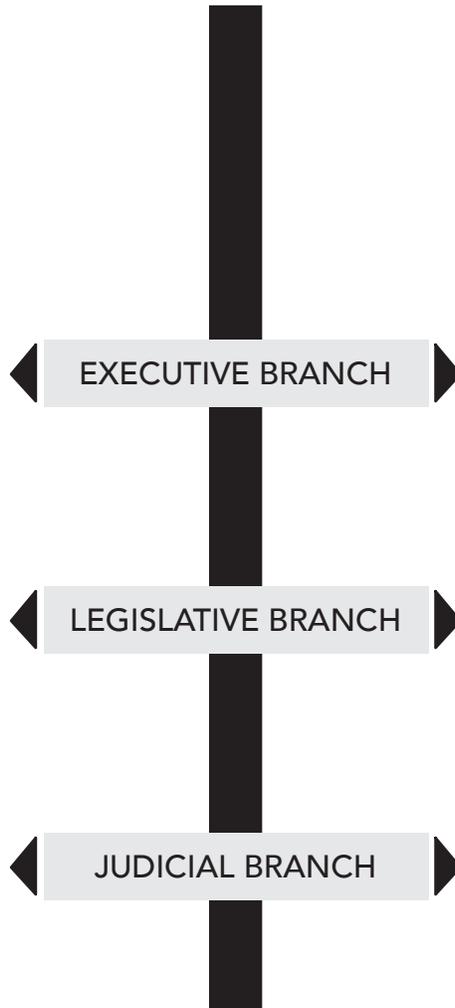
The Judicial Branch is led by the United States Supreme Court and is responsible for interpreting federal laws.



The Executive Branch is led by the **Governor** and is responsible for implementing state laws.

The Legislative Branch in Rhode Island is known as the **General Assembly** and is responsible for making state laws.

The Judicial Branch is led by the Rhode Island Supreme Court and is responsible for interpreting state laws.



Presidents, Governors, Senators, Representatives, and many city and town officials are elected by the people. This means that all voters have a say in who will run their government. When you turn 18 make sure your voice is heard by **VOTING!**

# MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Rhode Island cities and towns have many different forms of government, but most have someone in an executive branch role and groups of people who fill legislative roles. Together they make decisions about your community. Who makes up your local government?



**Now that you've learned about your local government, summarize what you've learned.**

In \_\_\_\_\_  
(your city/town)

we have a \_\_\_\_\_  
(executive)

who is \_\_\_\_\_  
(elected or appointed)

by \_\_\_\_\_  
(who does the electing or appointing?)

We have a \_\_\_\_\_  
council. (city/town)

The council has \_\_\_\_\_ members.  
(number of members)

I will be able to vote for \_\_\_\_\_  
(number of members) members when I turn 18.

Decisions about my school are made by a \_\_\_\_\_

(School Committee/Board of Trustees)

It has \_\_\_\_\_ members.  
(number of members)

They are \_\_\_\_\_  
(elected/appointed)

## EXECUTIVE

Depending on where you live, you might have a mayor, a town manager, or someone else who acts as the executive of your city or town.

### Do you have a...

- Town Manager
- Town Administrator
- City Manager
- Mayor
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

### Is this position...

- Elected
- Appointed

## LEGISLATIVE

### CITY/TOWN COUNCIL

In most municipalities, voters cast ballots for all of the council members, so a resident of a town with a five-person town council is allowed to vote for five people to fill those positions. In others, voters may only vote for one council member who will represent their neighborhood, or ward. In those instances, voters are sometimes also permitted to vote for additional council members who represent the entire municipality; they are called "at-large" council members.

### How many people are on your town or city council?

\_\_\_\_\_

### How many council members do individual voters get to elect?

\_\_\_\_\_

### SCHOOL COMMITTEE/ BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Rhode Island cities and towns also have School Committees or Boards of Trustees. They vote on issues like school uniforms, have the power to dedicate money for playgrounds and special programs, and make other important decisions about schools. In some cities and towns these officials are elected; in others they're appointed.

### How many members does your School Committee or Board of Trustees have?

\_\_\_\_\_

### Are they elected or appointed?

- Elected
- Appointed

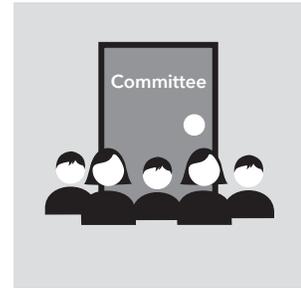
# HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW



**Your idea can become a law!**  
Bring your idea to your local Senator or Representative.



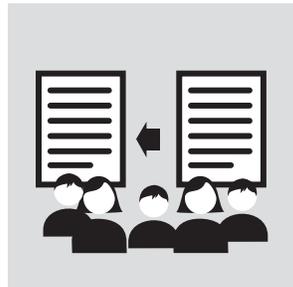
**The bill is introduced.**  
The Senator or Representative may introduce your idea as a bill in his or her respective chamber.



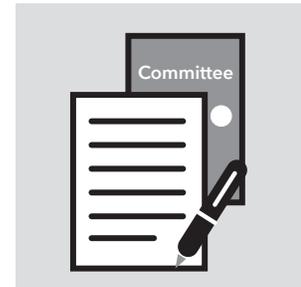
**The bill is assigned to a committee.**  
Most bills are assigned to a committee for review.



**The bill is approved.**  
If both chambers approve the bill, it is then submitted to the Governor.



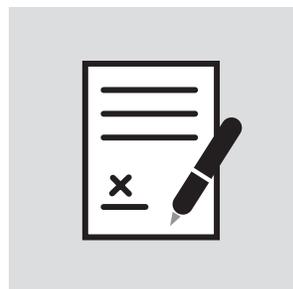
**The bill goes to both chambers.**  
Once the bill has been approved, it is transferred to the other chamber to undergo a similar process of review and approval.



**The bill is analyzed.**  
The committee makes recommendations and returns the bill to the originating chamber where it is voted on.



**At the Governor's desk...**  
If the Governor disapproves of the bill, he or she may veto it and return it to the legislature. If 3/5 of the Senators or Representatives approve the bill, it becomes a law without the Governor's approval.



**The Governor approves the bill!**  
The Governor may sign the bill into law, or allow it to become effective without his or her signature.



**Congratulations!**  
Your idea is now a law!

# SPEAKING UP

## HOW TO PARTICIPATE

Rhode Island, like the United States, has a representative democracy. That means we choose people to represent us in government by voting for them in elections. American citizens gain the right to vote when they turn 18. Voting is an important civic responsibility!

Even after election day, elected officials need to hear from the people that they represent.

## WHAT IF...

Someone proposes a bill with which you really...

agree

or

disagree

What can you do?

## YOU CAN...



Contact your government officials by mail, email, or telephone, or speak with them in person to let them know what you think. Find their contact information at [sos.ri.gov/govdirectory](https://sos.ri.gov/govdirectory).



Write a letter to your newspaper explaining why you agree or disagree with the proposed bill.



Write a statement about the bill and ask people to sign it. This is called a petition.



Find people who agree with you and hold a peaceful demonstration or rally. Rhode Islanders of all ages come to the Rhode Island State House with signs to make sure their government knows what they want.



Give your opinion (testify) at a hearing. A hearing is when a committee of legislators gather to hear others' opinions of the proposed bill, and prepare to make a recommendation to the rest of the legislative body.

After legislators have considered a proposed bill, they vote on it in the Rhode Island State House. You can watch the vote from the public galleries in the Senate and House of Representatives, or on Capitol TV, [rilin.state.ri.us/captv](https://rilin.state.ri.us/captv).

# THE ISSUES

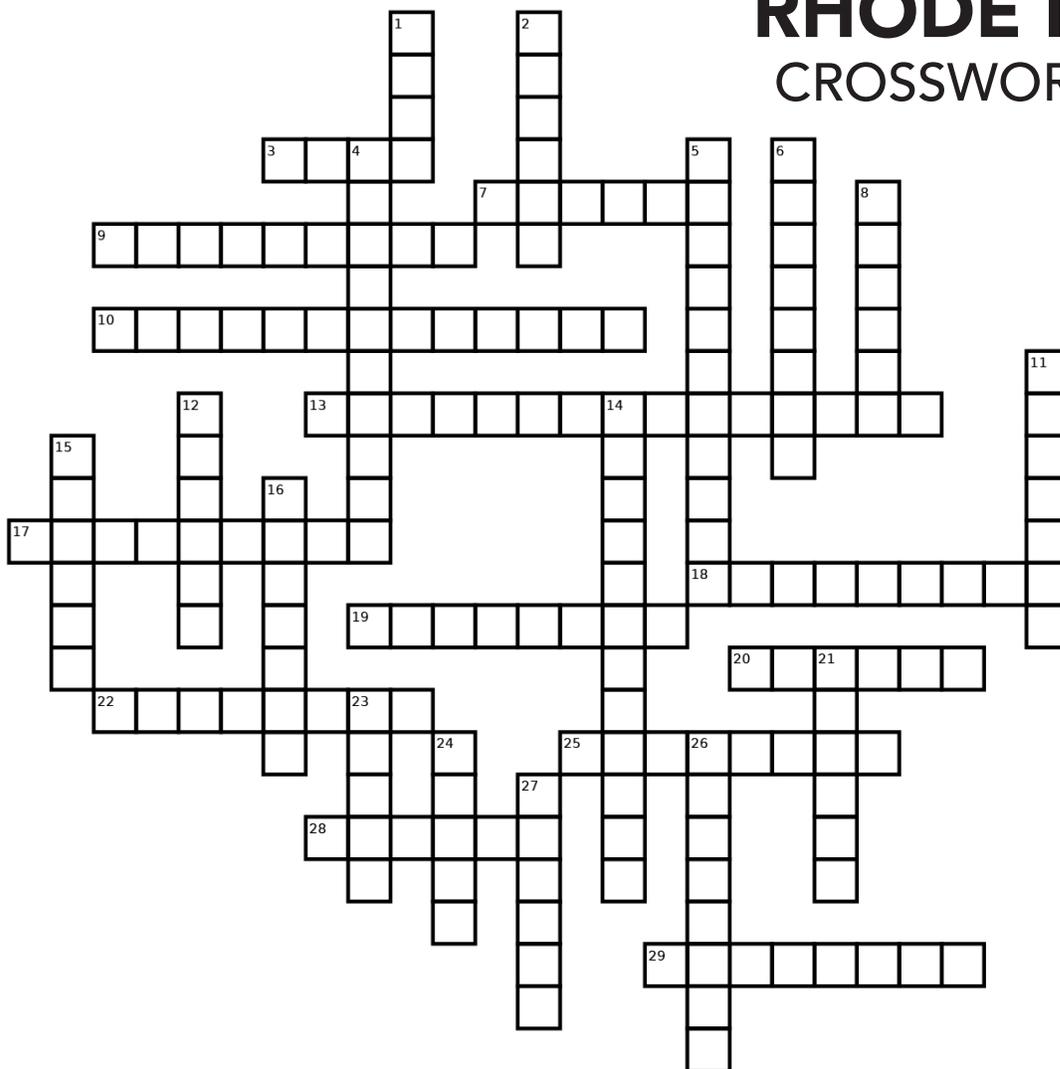
## WHO DOES WHAT?

There are three levels of government: local, state, and federal. These different levels have different decision making responsibilities and powers.

If we want to bring about change on an issue that matters to us, we need to know which part of government oversees it.

				
<i>Issues that affect us:</i>		<b>CITY/TOWN</b> <b>LOCAL</b> Mayor Town Administrator City/town Council School Committee	<b>RHODE ISLAND</b> <b>STATE</b> Governor General Officers State Representatives State Senators	<b>UNITED STATES</b> <b>FEDERAL</b> President Vice President US Representatives US Senators
 <b>EDUCATION</b>	School uniforms			
	School days required			
	Time for recess			
 <b>ENVIRONMENT</b>	Expand recycling			
	Ban smoking on beaches			
	Provide clean drinking water			
 <b>PUBLIC SAFETY</b>	More crosswalks			
	Drunk driving laws			
	Laws about guns			
 <b>ECONOMY</b>	Affordable housing			
	Taxes			
	Creating jobs			
 <b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	More bike paths			
	Public busses and trains			
	Better sidewalks			

# RHODE ISLAND CROSSWORD PUZZLE



## ACROSS

3. State motto.
7. One half of the legislative branch.
9. Indigenous tribe in Rhode Island; the \_\_\_\_\_ Trail is named after them.
10. Colonial founder of Providence; introduced religious freedom to the colonies.
13. House of \_\_\_\_\_; one half of the legislative branch.
17. Someone who runs for office.
18. Branch of government that upholds laws.
19. The right to vote.
20. Symbol of Rhode Island; found on the RI flag.
22. Leads the executive branch of state government.
25. General \_\_\_\_\_; Rhode Island's legislative branch.
28. A list of candidates for public office; where citizens can indicate their choices in elections.
29. A letter signed by many people in favor, or against, a proposed law.

## DOWN

1. Rhode Island's State House has a very big one of these; the Independent Man stands on top of it.
2. Ship burned by Rhode Islanders in the lead-up to the Revolutionary War.
4. Capitol of Rhode Island.
5. Branch of government that makes laws.
6. Painting of a person; the Rhode Island State House has many of these hanging on its walls.
8. The Rhode Island State House is made of this stone.
11. Royal \_\_\_\_\_; document that granted Rhode Islanders freedom of religion.
12. The way we choose people to represent us in government.
14. Indigenous tribe in Rhode Island; we have a town and a bay named after them.
15. Samuel \_\_\_\_\_; built the first water powered textile mill in America in Pawtucket, RI.
16. Public seating area in the Senate and House of Representatives.
21. An upright support pillar; the State House has many!
23. The \_\_\_\_\_ State; Rhode Island's nickname.
24. A peaceful demonstration in favor, or against, a cause.
26. Minimum age to run for state office in Rhode Island.
27. Gilbert \_\_\_\_\_; a famous Rhode Island artist who painted George Washington.

# RHODE ISLAND

## MATCHING GAME

- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 1. The number of state senators in Rhode Island  | _____ Roger Williams               |
| 2. Guaranteed Rhode Island settlers freedom of religion and freedom to govern their own colony | _____ Hope                         |
| 3. Colonial founder of Rhode Island  | _____ Seventy-five                 |
| 4. Presiding officer of the House of Representatives   | _____ The Rhode Island State House |
| 5. Our state's motto   | _____ Gilbert Stuart               |
| 6. Our state's nickname  | _____ President of the Senate      |
| 7. Number of state representatives in Rhode Island   | _____ Royal Charter of 1663        |
| 8. Stands watch over our State Capitol   | _____ Thirty-eight                 |
| 9. Has the fourth largest self-supported marble dome in the world                              | _____ The Ocean State              |
| 10. Rhode Island native and artist of the most famous painting in the State House              | _____ Speaker of the House         |
| 11. Presiding officer of the Senate  | _____ The Independent Man          |

### CAN YOU SOLVE THESE?

How long has the Slater Mill existed?  
(Hint: review page 9)



If the 16 seals in the Library each weigh 43 pounds, how much do all 16 seals weigh?



How many years has it been since Roger Williams came to Rhode Island?  
(Hint: review page 3)



How many decades are represented in the timeline on page 4? How many years?



If the RI State House is 330' long and 180' wide, what is its area?



What percentage of the elected officials on page 13 are women?



# VOCABULARY

<b>Act</b>	A bill passed by the Senate and the House of Representatives; acts become laws.
<b>Amend</b>	To change a proposed bill.
<b>Ballot</b>	A paper used for recording a vote; a list of candidates in an election.
<b>Bill</b>	An idea that someone proposes as a new law; if passed, a bill becomes an act.
<b>Campaign</b>	An organized effort to win an election.
<b>Candidate</b>	Someone who runs for political office.
<b>Congress</b>	The legislative branch of the federal government; the US Congress is made up of the Senate and the House of Representatives.
<b>Constituent</b>	Voter; someone who is represented in government.
<b>Debate</b>	Discussion about proposed laws in the Senate and House of Representatives.
<b>Democracy</b>	A government that is run by the people, or by representatives elected by the people.
<b>Federal</b>	Related to national governance.
<b>Gallery</b>	Areas in the Senate and House of Representatives chambers, reserved for the public to watch the legislative session.
<b>General Assembly</b>	Rhode Island's legislative branch.
<b>Hearing</b>	A meeting when legislators hear comments from the public and discuss proposed laws.
<b>House of Representatives</b>	One chamber of Rhode Island's General Assembly; it has 75 members.
<b>Legislation</b>	A bill or set of bills.
<b>Legislator</b>	Someone who is elected to represent citizens in the Senate or House of Representatives.
<b>Lobbyist</b>	A person or organization advocating to support or oppose proposed bills or policy decisions.
<b>Primary</b>	An election held to determine which candidate will represent a political party for a given office in a general or special election.
<b>Rally</b>	A peaceful demonstration in support of, or against, an idea.
<b>Rostrum</b>	Desk of the Senate President or Speaker of the House of Representatives.
<b>Suffrage</b>	The right to vote.
<b>Testify</b>	To give your opinion at a hearing.
<b>Senate</b>	One chamber of Rhode Island's General Assembly; it has 38 members.
<b>Veto</b>	The right of the executive branch (President or Governor) to reject a law passed by the legislative branch (Congress or the General Assembly); if the executive vetoes a bill, then it goes back to the legislative branch where they may try to pass it again.



**Nellie M. Gorbea**  
Secretary of State

This publication was produced by the  
Rhode Island Department of State