RHODE ISLAND LEAGUE
OF CITIES AND TOWNS

2026 LEGISLATIVE REPORT

JULY 2026



2026 LEAGUE PRIORITIES

Education Funding

Education is the largest investment made by most Rhode Island municipalities and is essential to the long-term success of our students, workforce, and economy. Maintaining a strong state-local partnership on education funding is critical to ensuring every student has access to a high-quality public education.

As work begins to implement a new education funding formula, the League supports a continued commitment to predictable state investment that advances educational equity, supports municipal fiscal sustainability, and reduces reliance on local property taxes.

Land Use and Zoning

Municipal leaders emphasize that cities and towns are best positioned to evaluate how new development aligns with local infrastructure, including water and sewer capacity, school enrollment, public safety resources, transportation networks, and climate resilience.

While preserving local decision-making is essential, municipal officials strongly support continued partnership with the state to expand housing opportunities, rehabilitate properties, streamline development review processes, and coordinate critical infrastructure investments. Greater state support is needed to modernize permitting systems, strengthen the municipal planning and inspection workforce, provide technical assistance for complex projects, and invest in water, sewer, stormwater, and transportation infrastructure that often determines when and where housing can be built.

Housing

Cities and towns strongly support responsible, well-planned housing that meets the needs of Rhode Islanders. Working with state leaders, nonprofit partners, developers, and community stakeholders, municipalities have helped approve and advance thousands of new housing units across the state.

The League has supported initiatives such as the Land Use and Housing Affordability Study Commissions to identify practical strategies that help municipalities meet their obligations under the Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Act while strengthening local planning capacity.

Continued collaboration between the state and municipalities is essential to expand housing opportunities, encourage redevelopment, modernize infrastructure, and support balanced growth that respects local character, infrastructure capacity, and long-term planning goals. By working together, state and local partners can remove barriers to housing production and ensure every Rhode Islander has access to safe, stable, and attainable housing.

Funding for Transportation, Infrastructure, and Resiliency

Strong infrastructure is the foundation for economic growth, housing development, and resilient communities. As Rhode Island works to increase its housing supply and strengthen its economy, municipalities will require sustained investment in transportation, water and sewer systems, stormwater management, public facilities, and other critical infrastructure.

While federal recovery funds have provided valuable one-time assistance, they are not a substitute for long-term state investment. A continued state-municipal partnership is essential to modernize infrastructure, improve climate resilience, support housing development, and ensure cities and towns can continue delivering safe, reliable, and efficient public services.

Unfunded Mandate Relief

Unfunded mandates place significant financial and administrative burdens on cities and towns by requiring new programs or services without providing the necessary resources for implementation. The League advocates for strong collaboration and accountability between state and local partners to ensure new policy initiatives are accompanied by adequate funding and practical implementation support.

To Reduce the Impact of Unfunded Mandates

- **Require Fiscal Impact Analysis –** Require all legislation and regulations affecting municipalities to include a municipal fiscal impact statement and review by the Office of Management and Budget and the Auditor General.
- **Strengthen State-Municipal Collaboration –** Ensure early consultation with the League and municipal officials during policy development and require legislative review of proposals that impose significant local costs or administrative responsibilities.
- **Provide Adequate Funding –** Support state-local cost-sharing, targeted grants, or other funding mechanisms to offset the costs of new state mandates and protect municipal fiscal flexibility.
- **Increase Transparency and Accountability –** Maintain a publicly accessible inventory of unfunded mandates, including estimated municipal costs and any state funding provided to offset those expenses.

Local Budget Discipline and Strategic State Investment

Rhode Island continues to rank among the highest states in the nation for property tax burden, making responsible local fiscal management essential. Municipalities remain committed to maximizing the value of taxpayer dollars by maintaining essential public services while limiting property tax increases through disciplined budgeting and efficient operations.

Since FY 2017, annual property tax growth has averaged just **2.45%**, well below the statutory **4.0%** tax levy cap. This record reflects prudent local financial management and the importance of reliable state investment in priorities such as education, housing, infrastructure, and other state-mandated programs.

A strong state-municipal partnership is critical to preserving local fiscal stability, protecting taxpayers, and ensuring cities and towns have the resources needed to deliver high-quality public services.

2026 Legislative Session Overview

Throughout the 2026 legislative session, the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns remained focused on three core priorities: protecting municipal authority, ensuring the practical implementation of state policies, and collaborative advocacy. The League engaged actively with legislators, state agencies, and municipal leaders across a wide array of issues impacting local government. Key principles guiding this work included:

- **Preserving Local Authority:** The League advocated maintaining municipal control over local decision-making, ensuring that new state laws and reforms reflect the unique needs, capacities, and responsibilities of Rhode Island's cities and towns.
- **Ensuring Practical Implementation:** The League emphasized the importance of realistic timelines, phased rollouts, and adequate resources for any new mandates, working to ensure that policy changes are feasible and sustainable at the local level.
- **Collaborative Advocacy:** League staff worked closely with bill sponsors and legislative committees to secure technical amendments and clarifying language that support municipal flexibility and effective governance.

Table of Contents

1. **Education and Education Aid** 2
2. **Housing, Land Use and Zoning** 4
3. **Unfunded Mandates** 9
4. **Improving Quality of Life / Streamlining Services** 10
5. **Workforce Management** 12
6. **Property Taxes** 13
7. **Fiscal Restraint & Fiscal Success** 16
8. **Elections & Secretary of State** 18
9. **Municipal Operations & General Government** 20
10. **League Priority Legislation** 23
11. **Speaker's Housing Package** 25

1. Education and Education Aid

Overview:
Education funding remained a significant issue during the 2026 legislative session, with numerous proposals introduced to modify Rhode Island's education funding formula, expand categorical aid, increase regionalization incentives, and provide additional support for high-need students. The League tracked legislation affecting municipal education funding, state aid, and local school district finances while continuing to advocate for a fair, predictable, and sustainable education funding system for Rhode Island's cities and towns.

Bills Enacted into Law

Charter Schools:

- **SB2787-Aaa/HB7415-A** – Establishment of Charter Public Schools
  Sponsor: Sen. Melissa Murray (D) / Rep. Mary Messier (D)
  Summary: Prohibits the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education from approving new charter schools or charter school expansions beginning with the 2026-2027 school year unless approved prior to July 1, 2025.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal education funding and local school districts.

Bills Held for Further Study

Education Funding Formula and Education Aid:

- **SB2025** – Education Equity and Property Tax Relief Act
  Sponsor: Sen. Gordon Rogers (R)
  Summary: Would have prohibited total education aid paid to any local education agency from being reduced by more than one percent (1%) of the previous year's municipal education appropriation.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal education funding.

- **SB2233 / HB7581** – Education Equity and Property Tax Relief Act
  Sponsor: Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D) / Rep. June Speakman (D)
  Summary: Would have established a new categorical funding category for civics education.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked legislation due to its impact on state education aid.

- **SB2373** – Education Equity and Property Tax Relief Act
  Sponsor: Sen. Walter S. Felag, Jr. (D)
  Summary: Would have established a permanent regionalization bonus equal to two percent (2%) of the state's share of foundation education aid.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on regional school district funding.

- **SB2548 / HB7245** – Education Equity and Property Tax Relief Act
  Sponsor: Sen. Linda Ujifusa (D) / Rep. Susan Donovan (D)
  Summary: Would have revised state funding calculations for special education and provided additional funding for extraordinary special education costs when students enroll after local budgets are adopted.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked legislation due to its potential impact on municipal education funding.

- **SB2819 / HB8160** – Education Equity and Property Tax Relief Act
  Sponsor: Sen. Melissa Murray (D) / Rep. Stephen M. Casey (D)
  Summary: Would have removed the funding requirement from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on state education funding.

- **SB2821 / HB8158** – Education Equity and Property Tax Relief Act
  Sponsor: Sen. Melissa Murray (D) / Rep. Stephen M. Casey (D)
  Summary: Would have required the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to review the formula components used to calculate aid for high-need students.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on state education funding.

- **SB2826 / HB8159** – Education Equity and Property Tax Relief Act
  Sponsor: Sen. Melissa Murray (D) / Rep. Stephen M. Casey (D)
  Summary: Would have increased the student success factor for local education agencies where more than 45 percent of students meet specified income thresholds.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on education aid for high-need school districts.

- **HB7318** – Education Equity and Property Tax Relief Act
  Sponsor: Rep. Megan Cotter (D)
  Summary: Would have increased the state's regionalization bonus to six percent (6%) of foundation education aid for regional school districts.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on regional school district funding.

- **HB7681** – Education Equity and Property Tax Relief Act
  Sponsor: Rep. Megan Cotter (D)
  Summary: Would have fully funded transportation categorical aid for regional school districts.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on regional school district funding.

- **HB7421** – State Aid
  Sponsor: Rep. Chris Paplauskas (R)
  Summary: Would have increased reporting requirements regarding partially funded and unfunded school district costs.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked legislation due to its impact on education funding transparency.

Curriculum:

- **SB2016** – Curriculum
  Sponsor: Sen. Dawn Euer (D)
  Summary: Would have added media literacy to the civic education standards taught in Rhode Island's K-12 public schools.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on local school districts.

School Facilities:

- **HB8167 / SB2229** – School Funds and Property
  Sponsor: Rep. Terri Cortvriend (D) / Sen. Ryan W. Pearson (D)
  Summary: Would have directed the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop regulations for energy-capable school buildings.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to potential impact on school facility planning/construction.

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2. Housing, Land Use and Zoning

Overview:
Housing, land use, and zoning continued to dominate the 2026 legislative session. Building on recent reforms, the General Assembly considered dozens of proposals aimed at increasing housing production, modernizing development regulations, expanding affordable housing opportunities, and streamlining local permitting.

Throughout the session, the League worked closely with legislators, municipal officials, and stakeholders to ensure that housing policy recognized the unique needs of Rhode Island's 39 cities and towns. While supporting efforts to increase housing availability, the League consistently advocated for preserving municipal home rule, maintaining local planning authority, providing implementation flexibility, and avoiding unfunded mandates.

Bills Enacted into Law

Low- and Moderate-Income Housing:

- **SB2690-A / HB7778 –** Low- and Moderate-Income Housing
  Sponsor: Sen. Victoria Gu (D) / Rep. Thomas Noret (D)
  Summary: Amends the Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Act by expanding statutory definitions to include moderate-income housing and revising income qualification standards.
  League Perspective: The League tracked legislation because of its potential impact on municipal affordable housing planning and implementation of Rhode Island's housing goals.

- **SB3159 / HB8142 –** Residential Reuse Incentive Act
  Sponsor: Sen. Jacob Bissaillon (D) / Rep. June Speakman (D)
  Summary: Creates the Residential Reuse Incentive Act to encourage the conversion and redevelopment of existing buildings for residential housing.
  League Perspective: The League supported and tracked legislation which encouraged housing development through the adaptive reuse of existing buildings while recognizing the important role municipalities play in local planning and permitting.

Housing Development Incentives:

- **SB2800-Aaa / HB8294-A –** Abandoned Property
  Sponsor: Sen. Jacob Bissaillon (D) / Rep. June Speakman (D)
  Summary: Authorizes qualifying energy storage systems as a permitted use on certain abandoned or contaminated properties when consistent with a municipality's comprehensive plan.
  League Perspective: The League supported and tracked legislation which encouraged redevelopment of underutilized properties while ensuring municipal comprehensive plans remained central to local land use decisions.

- **SB2912-Aaa / HB8101-Aaa –** Abandoned Property
  Sponsor: Sen. Jacob Bissaillon (D) / Rep. June Speakman (D)
  Summary: Updates Rhode Island's abandoned property statutes by revising key definitions, expanding eligibility, and establishing additional criteria for identifying abandoned and nuisance properties.
  League Perspective: The League supported and tracked legislation which provided municipalities with additional tools to address blighted and abandoned properties while monitoring potential administrative impacts.

Zoning Ordinances and Land Use:

- **SB2575-A / HB8040-Aaa –** Residential Recovery Residences
  Sponsor: Sen. Jacob Bissaillon (D) / Rep. June Speakman (D)
  Summary: Prohibits cities and towns from adopting zoning ordinances that impose restrictions on NARR-certified residential recovery residences that are not applicable to other residential homes.
  League Perspective: The League tracked legislation throughout the session because of its impact on municipal zoning authority and local land use regulations. The League worked with legislators to ensure municipalities retained the ability to administer local zoning ordinances consistent with state law.

- **SB2601-A / HB7173-A –** Facilitating Business Rapid Response to State Declared Disaster Act of 2024
  Sponsor: Sen. Matthew LaMountain (D)/ Rep. Brian Patrick Kennedy (D)
  Summary: Authorizes municipalities to grant zoning relief for the protection of critical infrastructure that has been subject to, or is reasonably at risk of, vandalism, trespass, theft, or damage from extreme weather or climate-related disasters. The legislation also incorporates broadband, internet, and wireless communications infrastructure into related statutory protections.
  League Perspective: The League supported and tracked legislation to provide municipalities with additional flexibility to protect critical infrastructure through local zoning processes while preserving municipal decision-making authority.

State Building Code and Permitting:

- **SB2632-Aaa / HB7774-A –** State Building Code
  Sponsor: Sen. Frank A. Ciccone III (D) / Rep. June Speakman (D)
  Summary: Requires the adoption of the 2024 International Residential Code effective January 1, 2027, establishes a moratorium on future residential building code amendments absent legislative approval, and outlines procedures for future code revisions.
  League Perspective: The League tracked the legislation to ensure municipalities had adequate implementation timelines and greater predictability in future building code adoption.

Bills Held for Further Study

- **SB2272 –** Multifamily Housing Act
  Sponsor: Sen. Tiara Mack (D)
  Summary: Would have required municipalities with populations exceeding 40,000 residents to permit middle housing in areas zoned for single-family residential use.
  League Perspective: The League tracked the legislation because of its potential impact on municipal zoning authority and comprehensive planning.

- **SB2469 / HB7374 –** Zoning Ordinances
  Sponsor: Sen. Alana DiMario (D) / Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee (D)
  Summary: Would have authorized municipalities to establish occupancy limits for unrelated individuals residing in dwelling units.
  League Perspective: The League tracked the proposal as a local zoning issue affecting community planning and neighborhood character.

- **SB2578 / HB7779 –** Zoning Ordinances
  Sponsor: Sen. Linda Ujifusa (D) / Rep. Terri Cortvriend (D)
  Summary: Would have authorized municipalities to adopt local standards governing accessory dwelling units, including owner occupancy, affordability, and size limitations.
  League Perspective: The League Supported and tracked legislation preserving municipal discretion by allowing communities to determine whether to adopt local ADU standards.

- **SB2274 / HB7565 –** Low- and Moderate-Income Housing
  Sponsor: Sen. Andrew Dimitri (D) / Rep. Deborah J. Fellela (D)
  Summary: Would have modified the population threshold applicable to certain substantial multifamily housing developments.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal housing planning.

- **SB2275 / HB7447 –** Procedure for Approval of Construction
  Sponsor: Sen. Gordon Rogers (R) / Rep. Sherry Roberts (R)
  Summary: Would have restored certain local review board findings requirements and clarified affordable housing unit calculations.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal development review procedures.

- **SB2421 / HB7659 – Low- and Moderate-Income Housing**
  Sponsor: Sen. David Tikoian (D) / Rep. Paul Santucci (R)
  Summary: Would have prohibited developers from submitting a single comprehensive permit application under certain circumstances.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on local housing review procedures.

- **SB2691 / HB8032-Aaa –** Low- and Moderate-Income Housing
  Sponsor: Sen. Victoria Gu (D) / Rep. Megan Cotter (D)
  Summary: Proposed modifications to affordable housing density requirements affecting public drinking water supply watersheds. The House companion was amended to establish a legislative study commission.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal planning and water resource protection.

- **SB2911 – Independent Building Inspectors**
  Sponsor: Sen. Matthew LaMountain (D)
  Summary: Would have authorized the use of independent building inspectors under specified circumstances to assist with permitting and inspection activities.
  League Perspective: The League closely tracked this proposal because of its potential impact on municipal building departments, permitting oversight, and local code enforcement responsibilities.

- **HB7563 – Third-Party Plan Review and Inspections**
  Sponsor: Rep. Robert Quattrocchi (R)
  Summary: Would have authorized the use of qualified third parties to perform plan reviews and building inspections under certain circumstances.
  League Perspective: The League expressed concerns regarding the proposal and worked to ensure that municipalities retained appropriate oversight and accountability for local code enforcement and permitting functions.

- **HB7446 – Watershed Density**
  Sponsor: Rep. Megan Cotter (D)
  Summary: Would have modified affordable housing density requirements affecting public drinking water supply watersheds.
  League Perspective: The League supported and tracked legislation efforts to protect public drinking water resources and advocated for preserving municipal authority to safeguard critical watershed areas while balancing housing objectives.

- **HB8387 – Minimum Lot Size Requirements**
  Sponsor: Rep. Cherie Cruz (D)
  Summary: Would have established statewide minimum lot size requirements applicable to residential development.
  League Perspective: The League voiced concerns regarding the proposal because of its potential impact on municipal zoning authority and local land use planning.

- **HB7219 – Accessory Dwelling Units**
  Sponsor: Rep. Mia Ackerman (D)
  Summary: Would have authorized municipalities to permit accessory dwelling units through local ordinance rather than establishing a statewide mandate.
  League Perspective: The League closely tracked legislation and welcomed the approach of providing municipalities with the option to authorize accessory dwelling units while preserving local decision-making.

- **SB3292 – Subdivision of Land**
  Sponsor: Sen. Leonidas P. Raptakis (D)
  Summary: Would have extended the period for completion of certain subdivision improvements and maintenance guarantees.
  League Perspective: The League closely tracked legislation and was encouraged by the proposed two-year extension, recognizing the practical challenges municipalities and developers have experienced in completing public improvements.

- **SB3161 / HB8363 – Student Housing Licensing**
  Sponsor: Sen. Jacob Bissaillon (D) / Rep. Stephen M. Casey (D)
  Summary: Would have established licensing requirements and standards applicable to certain student housing properties.
  League Perspective: The League supported and tracked legislation which provided municipalities with additional tools to address health, safety, and accountability issues associated with student housing.

- **SB2035 –** Zoning Ordinances
  Sponsor: Sen. Brian Thompson (D)
  Summary: Would have required accessory dwelling units (ADUs) to be permitted by right only if the property owner occupied the property and had done so for at least five years.
  League Perspective: The League tracked this proposal as part of the broader discussion surrounding accessory dwelling units and continued to advocate for preserving municipal flexibility in establishing local zoning standards.

- **SB2038 –** Zoning Ordinances
  Sponsor: Sen. Ryan W. Pearson (D)
  Summary: Would have established statewide maximum size limits for accessory dwelling units.
  League Perspective: The League tracked the legislation because of its potential impact on municipal zoning ordinances and local housing policies.

- **SB2043 –** Zoning Ordinances
  Sponsor: Sen. Ryan W. Pearson (D)
  Summary: Would have required accessory dwelling units not occupied by family members to be rented only at affordable rental rates.
  League Perspective: The League tracked the legislation because of its potential effect on municipal housing policy and local zoning administration.

- **SB2265 –** Zoning Ordinances
  Sponsor: Sen. Tiara Mack (D)
  Summary: Would have established statewide minimum residential lot size standards based on available infrastructure and required municipalities to amend local zoning ordinances accordingly.
  League Perspective: The League closely tracked this proposal because of its significant implications for municipal zoning authority and local land use planning.

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3. Unfunded Mandates

Overview:
The League continued to closely monitor legislation that would impose new responsibilities, operational requirements, or financial obligations on municipalities without providing corresponding state funding. Throughout the 2026 legislative session, the League remained committed to opposing unfunded mandates and advocating for local flexibility while ensuring municipalities have the resources necessary to implement new state requirements.

Bills Enacted into Law

No legislation in this category was enacted into law during the 2026 legislative session.

Bills Held for Further Study

Municipal Operations:

- **SB2152 – Open Meetings**
  Sponsor: Sen. Jacob Bissaillon (D)
  Summary: Would have required public bodies to provide translation services for all public meetings.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal operations and administrative costs.

Emergency Management:

- **SB2264 – Emergency Management**
  Sponsor: Sen. Tiara Mack (D)
  Summary: Would have required municipalities to implement specified procedures during extreme heat or cold events, including providing information regarding warming and cooling centers for at-risk individuals.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal emergency management responsibilities.

- **HB7987** – Emergency Management
  Sponsor: Rep. Teresa Tanzi (D)
  Summary: Would have required municipalities to develop emergency action plans for warming and cooling centers and established a statewide notification system for extreme weather alerts.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal emergency management responsibilities.

Municipal Buildings:

- **SB2529 / HB7081** – Next Generation Public Buildings Act
  Sponsor: Sen. Lori Urso (D) / Rep. Jennifer Boylan (D)
  Summary: Would have prohibited fossil fuel heating systems and fossil fuel-fired air and water heating systems in state and municipal buildings open to the public that are constructed, altered, or renovated on or after January 1, 2028.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal capital projects and construction costs.

Education:

- **SB2551 / HB7420** – Education Equity and Property Tax Relief Act
  Sponsor: Sen. Jessica de la Cruz (R) / Rep. Chris Paplauskas (R)
  Summary: Would have amended state education law to address unfunded mandates imposed on local school districts.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal education funding.

- **SB2873 / HB7582** – Health and Safety of Pupils
  Sponsor: Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D) / Rep. Megan Cotter (D)
  Summary: Would have required inspections and evaluations of indoor air quality systems, including heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems, in every school building.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal school facility operations and costs.

Municipal Liability:

- **SB3188 / HB7761** – Public Use of Private Lands – Liability Limitations
  Sponsor: Sen. Stefano Famiglietti (D) / Rep. Robert Craven, Sr. (D)
  Summary: Would have amended the definition of "owner" to exclude the state and municipalities from liability limitations applicable to the public use of private lands.
  League Perspective: Opposed and tracked legislation due to its potential impact on municipal liability.

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4. Improving Quality of Life / Streamlining Services

Overview:
The General Assembly considered legislation during the 2026 session aimed at improving municipal services, supporting public libraries, enhancing community partnerships, promoting recycling initiatives, and strengthening public health programs. The League tracked these proposals for their potential impact on municipal operations, local service delivery, and partnerships between state and local governments.

Bills Enacted into Law

Libraries:

- **SB2525-Aaa / HB7606-Aaa** – Library Ebook Contracts
  Sponsor: Sen. Mark McKenney (D) / Rep. Lauren Carson (D)
  Summary: Establishes limitations on contract terms governing the licensing of electronic books and digital audiobooks to libraries, protecting libraries from certain unfair sales practices.
  League Perspective: League supported and tracked legislation due to its potential impact on municipal libraries and public access to digital resources.

Bills Held for Further Study

Community Partnerships:

- **SB2689** – Office of Health and Human Services
  Sponsor: Sen. Melissa Murray (D)
  Summary: Would have required the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to establish a statewide network of Equity Zones, bringing together municipalities, nonprofits, state agencies, service providers, and community organizations to address local social determinants of health.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked legislation due to its potential impact on municipal participation in community health initiatives.

Recycling & Solid Waste

- **SB3012 / HB7911** – Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging and Paper Act
  Sponsor: Sen. Mark McKenney (D) / Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee (D)
  Summary: Would have established a comprehensive statewide extended producer responsibility program for packaging, paper products, and beverage container recycling.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked legislation due to its potential impact on municipal recycling programs and solid waste management.

- **SB2441 / HB7675** — Composting and Organic Waste Diversion
  Sponsor: Sen. Bridget Valverde (D) / Rep. Terri Cortvriend (D)
  Summary: Would have established a Compost Fund to provide grants supporting composting programs and reducing solid waste statewide.
  League Perspective: The League supported and tracked legislation because it provided municipalities with additional opportunities to expand composting programs, reduce solid waste disposal costs, and advance local sustainability initiatives through state grant funding.

5. Workforce Management

Overview:
Workforce management remained a major focus during the 2026 legislative session, with numerous proposals affecting municipal labor relations, collective bargaining, retirement benefits, workers' compensation, and public employee pensions. The League closely tracked legislation that could impact municipal workforce management, personnel costs, labor negotiations, and the long-term financial obligations of Rhode Island's cities and towns.

Bills Enacted into Law

Public Safety Personnel:

- **SB2326 / HB7149** – Relief of Injured and Deceased Fire Fighters and Police Officers
  Sponsor: Sen. Peter Appollonio (D) / Rep. Earl Read (D)
  Summary: Requires firefighters and police officers seeking off-duty injury benefits to demonstrate they reasonably believed an emergency existed requiring their immediate assistance.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal public safety personnel benefits.

Labor Relations

- **SB2735-Aaa / HB7972-A** – State Purchases
  Sponsor: Sen. John Burke (D) / Rep. Evan Shanley (D)
  Summary: Revises the process governing the establishment and administration of Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) on public construction projects.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked due to its potential impact on municipal public works projects.

- **SB2925 / HB7041** – Firefighters' Arbitration
  Sponsor: Sen. John Burke (D) / Rep. David Bennett (D)
  Summary: Provides that all contractual provisions contained in a firefighters' collective bargaining agreement remain in effect until a successor agreement or an interest arbitration award is reached.
  League Perspective: Opposed and tracked legislation due to its impact on municipal collective bargaining.

- **SB3119 / HB7040** – Municipal Police Arbitration
  Sponsor: Sen. David Tikoian (D) / Rep. David Bennett (D)
  Summary: Extends the provisions of municipal police collective bargaining agreements until a successor agreement or an interest arbitration award is reached.
  League Perspective: Opposed and tracked legislation due to its impact on municipal collective bargaining.

Professional Licensing & Retirement:

- **SB3138 / HB7146-aa** – Division of Professional Regulation
  Sponsor: Sen. Brian Thompson (D) / Rep. Deborah J. Fellela (D)
  Summary: Establishes a retirement status license for individuals previously licensed by the Department of Labor and Training.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on workforce retention.

Workers' Compensation:

- **SB3297 / HB8524** – Workers' Compensation
  Sponsor: Sen. Frank A. Ciccone III (D) / Rep. Arthur J. Corvese (D)
  Summary: Revises various provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act relating to the Workers' Compensation Court's jurisdiction and authority.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked due to its impact on municipal employers.

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6. Property Taxes

Overview:
Property taxation remained an important issue during the 2026 legislative session, with proposals affecting local tax administration, tax relief programs, veterans' exemptions, municipal assessments, tax sales, and property tax incentives. The League tracked legislation that could affect municipal revenues, local tax administration, and the authority of cities and towns to administer equitable and sustainable property tax policies.

Bills Enacted into Law

Levy and Assessment of Local Taxes:

- **SB2453 / HB7568** – Levy and Assessment of Local Taxes
  Sponsor: Sen. John Burke (D) / Rep. Thomas Noret (D)
  Summary: Authorizes municipalities to waive interest on overdue commercial property taxes under specified circumstances.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked due to its potential impact on local tax administration and municipal revenue collection.

Property Subject to Taxation:

- **SB2827 / HB7242** – Property Subject to Taxation
  Sponsor: Sen. Tiara Mack (D) / Rep. Michelle McGaw (D)
  Summary: Exempts qualifying urban and small farmers from certain sales, real and personal property, and income taxes while establishing definitions for urban farming and urban farmland.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal property tax administration.

Bills Held for Further Study

Property Tax Relief:

- **SB2031 / HB7700** – Property Tax Relief
  Sponsor: Sen. Linda Ujifusa (D) / Rep. Megan Cotter (D)
  Summary: Would have increased the income eligibility threshold and maximum tax credit available to elderly and disabled homeowners and renters.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on property tax relief programs.

Levy and Assessment of Local Taxes:

- **SB2259 / HB7299** – Levy and Assessment of Local Taxes
  Sponsor: Sen. Ryan W. Pearson (D) / Rep. Brandon Voas (D)
  Summary: Would have authorized municipalities to adopt a homestead exemption of up to twenty percent (20%) of a residential property's assessed value.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on local property tax policy.

- **SB2808 / HB7567** – Levy and Assessment of Local Taxes – Tax Deferral Program
  Sponsor: Sen. Elaine Morgan (R) / Rep. Megan Cotter (D)
  Summary: Would have established a municipal property tax deferral program for senior citizens, disabled persons, and veterans.
  League Perspective: Opposed and tracked legislation due to its potential impact on municipal tax administration.

- **HB7448** – Levy and Assessment of Local Taxes
  Sponsor: Rep. Ramon Perez (D)
  Summary: Would have limited increases resulting from consecutive municipal property revaluations to twenty percent (20%).
  League Perspective: Opposed and tracked legislation due to its potential impact on municipal assessing practices and local revenues.

- **HB8017** – Levy and Assessment of Local Taxes
  Sponsor: Rep. David Morales (D)
  Summary: Would have modified residential property assessments in certain municipalities based on housing affordability criteria.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal property tax assessments.

Property Subject to Taxation:

- **SB2557** – Property Subject to Taxation
  Sponsor: Sen. Andrew Dimitri (D)
  Summary: Would have exempted qualifying single-family primary residences owned by certain long-term Rhode Island residents age sixty-five (65) or older from property taxation.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal property tax revenues.

- **SB2916 / HB7152-A** – Property Subject to Taxation
  Sponsor: Sen. Brian Thompson (D) / Rep. Brandon Voas (D)
  Summary: Would have increased the minimum municipal veterans' property tax exemption from $1,000 to $6,000.
  League Perspective: Opposed and tracked legislation due to its potential impact on municipal property tax revenues. Will review with sponsors for next legislative session.

- **HB7084** – Property Subject to Taxation
  Sponsor: Rep. Alex Finkelman (D)
  Summary: Would have authorized municipalities to provide local property tax exemptions to all honorably discharged veterans regardless of dates or periods of service.
  League Perspective: Supported the enabling aspect and tracked due to its impact on municipal tax exemption programs.

- **HB8485** – Property Subject to Taxation
  Sponsor: Rep. Samuel A. Azzinaro (D)
  Summary: Would have authorized municipalities to transfer a qualifying veteran's property tax exemption to a newly purchased residence for the remainder of the tax year.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal property tax administration.

Non-Owner-Occupied Property Tax:

- **SB2682** – Non-Owner-Occupied Property Tax Act
  Sponsor: Sen. V. Susan Sosnowski (D)
  Summary: Would have exempted certain non-winterized, non-owner-occupied properties continuously owned by the taxpayer for at least twenty-five (25) years.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on implementation of the Non-Owner-Occupied Property Tax Act.

- **SB2698** – Non-Owner-Occupied Property Tax Act
  Sponsor: Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D)
  Summary: Would have established an exemption for certain seasonably habitable non-owner-occupied residences.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on implementation of the Non-Owner-Occupied Property Tax Act.

Economic Development / Tourism:

- **SB2346 / HB7695** – Rhode Island Commerce Corporation
  Sponsor: Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D) / Rep. David Bennett (D)
  Summary: Would have established property, sales and use tax incentives for qualifying data centers located in Rhode Island.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal economic development and property taxation.

- **HB7657** – Tourism and Development
  Sponsor: Rep. Lauren Carson (D)
  Summary: Would have distinguished residential and commercial short-term rental properties for taxation purposes.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal taxation of short-term rental properties.

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7. Fiscal Restraint & Fiscal Success

Overview:
Fiscal policy remained a central focus during the 2026 legislative session, with legislation addressing municipal revenues, state aid, tax policy, local financial flexibility, and fiscal accountability. The League tracked proposals affecting municipal finance, local revenue generation, state reimbursements, and fiscal policies that could impact the long-term financial stability of Rhode Island's cities and towns.

Bills Enacted into Law

Local Licensing:

- **SB2627-A / HB8009-A** – Temporary Extended Service Hours
  Sponsor: Sen. Matthew LaMountain (D) / Rep. Joshua J. Giraldo (D)
  Summary: Authorizes, but does not require, local licensing authorities to permit temporary extended indoor service hours under existing liquor licenses during certain 2026 FIFA World Cup matches.
  League Perspective: Supported with amendments and tracked due to its potential impact on municipal licensing authority and local economic activity.

Bills Held for Further Study

Taxation:

- **SB2082** – Sales and Use Taxes – Liability and Computation
  Sponsor: Sen. Thomas Paolino (R)
  Summary: Would have phased out the local meals and beverage tax by January 1, 2030.
  League Perspective: The League opposed and tracked legislation because of its potential impact on municipal revenues. The League recognized the importance of preserving stable local revenue sources that help cities and towns fund essential municipal services.

- **SB2232** – Real Estate Conveyance Tax
  Sponsor: Sen. Victoria Gu (D)
  Summary: Would have authorized municipalities to establish a local real estate conveyance tax on certain high-value residential property transactions, with revenues dedicated to affordable housing.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal revenue options.

- **SB2450 / HB8332** – Real Estate Conveyance Tax
  Sponsor: Sen. Meghan Kallman (D) / Rep. Mary Messier (D)
  Summary: Would have allocated the real estate conveyance tax among municipalities based on the assessed value of property located within each municipality.
  League Perspective: Supported with amendments and tracked due to its impact on municipal tax revenues.

- **HB8192** – Property Subject to Taxation
  Sponsor: Rep. David Morales (D)
  Summary: Would have imposed a tax on certain private higher education endowments exceeding one billion dollars.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential fiscal impact.

Municipal Finance:

- **SB3127 / HB7369** – Audit of Accounts and Installation of Systems
  Sponsor: Sen. Leonidas P. Raptakis (D) / Rep. Leonela Felix (D)
  Summary: Would have revised municipal audit compliance requirements relating to pension plan contributions.
  League Perspective: Opposed and tracked legislation due to its potential impact on municipal financial reporting.

Property Tax & Rent:

- **SB2703 / HB8035** – Property Tax/Rent Freeze
  Sponsor: Sen. Leonidas P. Raptakis (D) / Rep. Paul Santucci (R)
  Summary: Would have prohibited municipalities that adopt rent control ordinances from increasing property taxes while such ordinances remain in effect.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its mandating language and potential impact on municipal taxing authority.

Infrastructure:

- **SB2767 / HB7882** – Rhode Island Utility Fair Share Roadway Repair Act
  Sponsor: Sen. Brian Thompson (D) / Rep. Stephen M. Casey (D)
  Summary: Would have required utility companies to provide advance notice to nearby residents and businesses before closing municipal or state roadways for utility work.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked due to its impact on municipal infrastructure coordination.

Emergency Medical Services:

- **SB2685 / HB7485** – Emergency Medical Transportation Services
  Sponsor: Sen. Victoria Gu (D) / Rep. Tina Spears (D)
  Summary: Would have increased insurance reimbursement rates and required coverage for emergency medical transportation services.
  League Perspective: Support and tracked due to its impact on municipal emergency medical service providers and local ambulance operations.

8. Elections & Secretary of State

Overview:
The General Assembly considered numerous election-related measures during the 2026 legislative session affecting election administration, ballot access, mail voting, campaign finance, voter registration, municipal canvassing authorities, and election procedures. The League tracked legislation impacting municipal election officials, local canvassing authorities, and the administration of state and local elections while advocating for clear, efficient, and secure election processes.

Bills Enacted into Law

Election Administration:

- **SB2130 / HB7358** – Conduct of Elections and Voting Equipment, and Supplies
  Sponsor: Sen. Mark McKenney (D) / Rep. Jacquelyn Baginski (D)
  Summary: Requires the Board of Elections to report and publish all write-in votes on its website, regardless of whether the write-in candidate qualified for office.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked due to its potential impact on election administration and reporting.

- **SB3113 / HB7782** – Conduct of Elections and Voting Equipment, and Supplies
  Sponsor: Sen. Matthew LaMountain (D) / Rep. Jennifer Boylan (D)
  Summary: Extends the deadline to request an election recount from seven (7) days to nine (9) days and delays issuance of certificates of election until any recount is completed.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked due to its potential impact on election administration.

Primary Elections:

- **SB2147-A / HB7049-aa** – Primary Elections
  Sponsor: Sen. John Burke (D) / Rep. Jacquelyn Baginski (D)
  Summary: Requires the state primary election to be held on Wednesday when Labor Day falls on Tuesday that would otherwise be the statutory primary date.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked due to its potential impact on municipal election administration and fiscal relief for our members.

- **SB2309 / HB7092** – Primaries for Election of Delegates to National Conventions and for Presidential Preference
  Sponsor: Sen. Frank A. Ciccone III (D) / Rep. Ramon Perez (D)
  Summary: Revises signature requirements and filing deadlines for presidential preference delegate elections.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on election administration.

- **SB2491 / HB7090** – Primaries for Election of Delegates to National Conventions and for Presidential Preference
  Sponsor: Sen. Matthew LaMountain (D) / Rep. Joseph McNamara (D)
  Summary: Changes the presidential preference primary election date beginning in 2028.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on election administration.

Mail Ballots:

- **SB2341-A / HB7007-aa** – Mail Ballots
  Sponsor: Sen. Matthew LaMountain (D) / Rep. William W. O'Brien (D)
  Summary: Permanently authorizes electronically transmitted mail ballots for eligible military and disabled voters.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on election administration.

- **SB3112 / HB7494** – Mail Ballots
  Sponsor: Sen. Andrew Dimitri (D) / Rep. Evan Shanley (D)
  Summary: Requires public observation areas for mail ballot processing and signature verification procedures for mail ballots.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on election administration.

Campaign Finance:

- **SB2334-B / HB7495-A** – Safeguarding Election Candidates Using Reasonable Expenditures Act
  Sponsor: Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D) / Rep. Jennifer Boylan (D)
  Summary: Permits campaign funds to be used for certain security-related expenses incurred by candidates and public officials.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on campaign finance administration.

Bills Held for Further Study

School Committee Elections

- **SB2404 / HB7091** – Voting Age for School Committee Elections
  Sponsor: Sen. Tiara Mack (D) / Rep. Leonela Felix (D)
  Summary: Would have authorized municipalities to allow 16- and 17-year-old residents to register and vote in local school committee elections under specified conditions.
  League Perspective: The League expressed concerns regarding this proposal because of its potential impact on municipal election administration and the implementation of local school committee elections.

Local Canvassing Authorities:

- **SB2282 / HB7378** – Local Canvassing Authorities
  Sponsor: Sen. Dimitri (D)/Rep. Baginski (D)
  Summary: Would have revised provisions governing local canvassing authorities, including the administration of local election responsibilities and the designation of local election officials.
  League Perspective: The League Supported and tracked legislation because it expanded the administrative tools available to local boards of canvassers, providing greater flexibility in election administration while creating opportunities for improved efficiency and potential municipal cost savings.

9. Municipal Operations & General Government

Overview:
The General Assembly considered a variety of legislation during the 2026 session affecting municipal operations, public records, infrastructure, procurement, animal control, property rights, local authority, and government administration. The League tracked these proposals for their potential impact on municipal governance, local operations, and the delivery of public services.

Bills Enacted into Law

Animal Control:

- **SB2151 / HB7562** – Cruelty to Animals
  Sponsor: Sen. Lori Urso (D) / Rep. Matthew Dawson (D)
  Summary: Authorizes municipal animal control officers to take custody of abandoned, neglected, or hazardously accumulated animals and expands their enforcement authority.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked due to its potential impact on municipal animal control operations.

Child Care:

- **SB2273 / HB7371** – Zoning Ordinances
  Sponsor: Sen. Alana DiMario (D) / Rep. Mary Ann Shallcross Smith (D)
  Summary: Establishes statewide zoning standards permitting family childcare homes serving up to twelve (12) children.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked due to its potential impact on municipal zoning and childcare availability.

Property Records:

- **SB2715-A / HB7551-aa** – Fraud and False Dealing
  Sponsor: Sen. Valerie Lawson (D) / Rep. Brian Patrick Kennedy (D)
  Summary: Establishes the criminal offense of real estate title fraud and authorizes municipalities to refuse suspicious land evidence recordings from persons who are not trusted submitters.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal land evidence recording procedures.

Public Health:

- **SB2795 / HB7222** – Pesticide Control
  Sponsor: Sen. Melissa Murray (D) / Rep. Rebecca Kislak (D)
  Summary: Establishes voluntary municipal rodent integrated pest management pilot programs.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked due to its potential impact on municipal public health initiatives.

Bills Held for Further Study

Municipal Authority:

- **SB2574 / HB7150** – General Powers
  Sponsor: Sen. Jessica de la Cruz (R)/ Chris Paplauskas (R)
  Summary: Would have expanded municipal authority by clarifying the general powers available to cities and towns in carrying out local governmental functions.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked legislation because it strengthened municipal authority and provided cities and towns with greater flexibility to address local issues and deliver services effectively.

Municipal Liability:

- **SB3040 / HB8027** – Actions By and Against Towns
  Sponsor: Sen. Sam Bell (D)/ Rep. Jennifer Stewart (D)
  Summary: Would have amended the laws governing legal actions against municipalities.
  League Perspective: Opposed and tracked legislation because of its potential impact on municipal liability exposure and the legal and financial responsibilities of cities and towns.

- **HB7212** – Actions By and Against Towns
  Sponsor: Rep. Leonela Felix (D)
  Summary: Would have clarified provisions governing legal actions involving municipalities.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked legislation because it provided greater clarity regarding municipal legal proceedings and promoted consistency in the administration of local government.

- **HB7213** – Actions By and Against Towns
  Sponsor: Rep. Leonela Felix (D)
  Summary: Would have revised statutory provisions governing municipal legal actions.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked legislation because it modernized municipal legal procedures and improved consistency in local government administration.

- **HB7215** – Governmental Tort Liability
  Sponsor: Rep. Leonela Felix (D)
  Summary: Would have amended provisions governing governmental tort liability applicable to municipalities.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked legislation because it provided greater clarity regarding municipal liability and promoted a fair and consistent application of governmental tort protections.

- **HB7224** – Award of Municipal Contracts
  Sponsor: Rep. John G. Edwards (D)
  Summary: Would have revised provisions governing the award of municipal contracts.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked legislation because it promoted greater flexibility and efficiency in municipal procurement practices while maintaining transparency and accountability.

Utility Relocation:

- **SB2105 / HB7244** – Relocation of Utility Services
  Sponsor: Sen. Linda Ujifusa (D)/ Rep. Michelle McGaw (D)
  Summary: Would have revised the procedures governing the relocation of utility infrastructure associated with municipal and state transportation projects.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked legislation because it improved coordination between municipalities and utility providers while helping to reduce project delays and associated costs.

- **SB3132 / HB7871** – Relocation of Utility Services
  Sponsor: Sen. Robert Britto (D)/ Rep. Alex Finkelman (D)
  Summary: Would have further revised statutory requirements governing the relocation of utility facilities associated with public infrastructure projects.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked legislation because it sought to improve project coordination, increase efficiency, and reduce unnecessary costs associated with municipal infrastructure improvements.

Municipal Operations:

- **SB2389 / HB7305** – Access to Public Records
  Sponsor: Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D) / Rep. Jason Knight (D)
  Summary: Would have revised several provisions of the Access to Public Records Act, including changes to enforcement, penalties, and disclosure requirements.
  League Perspective: Opposed and tracked legislation in current form and tracked due to its potential impact on municipal compliance with the Access to Public Records Act.

- **SB2393 / HB7985** – Access to Public Records
  Sponsor: Sen. Todd Patalano (D) / Rep. Earl Read (D)
  Summary: Would have required individuals submitting public records requests to provide identifying information.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked legislation because it provided municipalities with additional clarity in administering public records requests while maintaining transparency and accountability under the Access to Public Records Act by requiring those with a public records request to provide identifying information.

- **SB2612 / HB7676** – Open Meetings
  Sponsor: Sen. Sam Zurier (D) / Rep. June Speakman (D)
  Summary: Would have amended provisions of the Open Meetings Act governing the conduct of public meetings.
  League Perspective: Opposed and tracked legislation because of its potential operational, administrative and financial impact on municipalities.

- **SB2480 / HB7576** – Access to Public Records
  Sponsor: Sen. Meghan Kallman (D) / Rep. Rebecca Kislak (D)
  Summary: Makes traffic accident data a public record, subject to applicable federal law.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal public records administration.

Law Enforcement:

- **SB3041 / HB8118** – Law Enforcement Officers' Due Process, Accountability, and Transparency Act
  Sponsor: Sen. Todd Patalano (D) / Rep. Thomas Noret (D)
  Summary: Would have amended provisions governing payment of legal fees under the Law Enforcement Officers' Due Process, Accountability, and Transparency Act.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal law enforcement agencies.

Public Safety & Code Enforcement:

- **SB2481 / HB8066** – Trespass and Vandalism
  Sponsor: Sen. David P. Tikoian (D) / Rep. Jacquelyn Baginski (D)
  Summary: Would have established a statutory process for the removal of unauthorized occupants ("squatters"), clarified that squatters are not entitled to the protections afforded to lawful tenants under the Residential Landlord and Tenant Act, and authorized law enforcement assistance to remove unauthorized occupants under specified circumstances.
  League Perspective: The League supported and tracked legislation because it provided municipalities and local law enforcement with clearer statutory authority to address unauthorized occupancy while assisting property owners in resolving situations that could affect neighborhood safety, property maintenance, and community quality of life.

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10. League Priority Legislation

Overview:
Throughout the 2026 legislative session, the League advanced and tracked legislation supporting the priorities of Rhode Island's 39 cities and towns. These proposals focused on strengthening municipal finances, preserving local authority, improving public safety, increasing operational flexibility, and enhancing partnerships between state and local government. While many of these initiatives were not enacted this session, they remain important priorities for the League and will continue to inform future advocacy efforts.

Bills Enacted into Law

Education Funding:

- **HB8351-Aaa / SB3015** – **Rhode** Island Education Funding and Accountability Act
  Sponsor: Rep. Joseph McNamara (D) / Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D)
  Summary: Establishes a special joint legislative commission to conduct a comprehensive review of Rhode Island's education funding formula and education finance system.
  League Perspective: Supported, tracked and actively engaged in Blue Ribbon Commission efforts to undertake a comprehensive review of the state's education funding formula and its impact on municipalities.

Bills Held for Further Study

Infrastructure:

- **SB2042 / HB7502** – Sidewalks
  Sponsor: Sen. Gordon Rogers (R) / Rep. Mary Ann Shallcross Smith (D)
  Summary: Would have transferred responsibility for maintaining sidewalks along state highways, excluding snow and ice removal, from municipalities to the state.
  League Perspective: The League supported and tracked legislation to return responsibility for maintaining state-owned and state-installed infrastructure to the State, relieving municipalities of an unfunded maintenance obligation.

Municipal State Aid:

- **SB2250 / HB7248** – State Aid
  Sponsor: Sen. Linda Ujifusa (D) / Rep. Terri Cortvriend (D)
  Summary: Would have reinstated municipal general revenue sharing distributed among Rhode Island's 39 cities and towns.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked legislation to strengthen municipal fiscal stability.

- **SB2552 / HB7468** – State Aid
  Sponsor: Sen. Stefano Famiglietti (D) / Rep. Scott Slater (D)
  Summary: Would have increased Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) funding for qualifying tax-exempt properties.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked legislation to improve municipal reimbursement for tax-exempt properties.

Municipal Workforce:

- **SB2543 / HB7801** – Retirement of Municipal Employees
  Sponsor: Sen. Gordon Rogers (R) / Rep. Paul Santucci (R)
  Summary: Would have increased the number of days retired municipal employees could return to work without interruption of pension benefits from seventy-five (75) to ninety (90) days, or 630 hours annually.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked legislation to provide municipalities with greater workforce flexibility.

Public Works:

- **SB2743 / HB7971** – Labor and Payment of Debts by Contractors
  Sponsor: Sen. Frank A. Ciccone III (D) / Rep. Arthur J. Corvese (D)
  Summary: Would increase the prevailing wage threshold for public works construction projects from $1,000 to $100,000.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked legislation to reduce administrative burdens and construction costs for municipalities.

Public Safety:

- **SB2751 / HB8012** – Rhode Island Pedestrian Safety Act
  Sponsor: Sen. Jacob Bissaillon (D) / Rep. Nathan Biah (D)
  Summary: Would have authorized municipalities to utilize automated pedestrian safety monitoring systems with civil penalties for violations.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked legislation to improve pedestrian safety and provide municipalities with additional traffic safety tools.

- **HB8523** – Special Stops Required
  Sponsor: Rep. Thomas Noret (D)
  Summary: Would have authorized motorists to admit liability and pay school bus stop-arm camera violations directly to municipalities without a court appearance.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked legislation to improve school bus safety enforcement and municipal administration.

Planning:

- **SB3092 / HB8031** – Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Act
  Sponsor: Sen. Matthew LaMountain (D) / Rep. Joseph J. Solomon, Jr. (D)
  Summary: Would have authorized municipalities to obtain a one-time extension for updating comprehensive plans while maintaining the effectiveness of existing plans.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked legislation to provide municipalities with additional planning flexibility.

Municipal Governance:

- **SJR3162 / HJR7678** – Joint Resolution Creating a Special Joint Legislative Commission on City and Town Affairs
  Sponsor: Sen. Jacob Bissaillon (D) / Rep. Stephen M. Casey (D)
  Summary: Would have established a joint legislative commission to review issues affecting Rhode Island's municipalities and strengthen coordination between state and local government.
  League Perspective: Supported and tracked legislation to improve state and municipal collaboration.

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11. Speaker's Housing Package

Overview:
Housing remained one of the General Assembly's highest priorities during the 2026 legislative session. Building upon reforms enacted in recent years, Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi introduced a comprehensive housing package designed to increase housing production, expand affordable housing opportunities, streamline development approvals, modernize land use policies, and address barriers to housing availability throughout Rhode Island.

The League closely tracked each component of the Speaker's housing package, working collaboratively with legislative leadership, municipal officials, planners, and stakeholders to ensure that the legislation recognized the unique needs of Rhode Island's 39 cities and towns. Throughout the session, the League advocated for preserving local decision-making, maintaining implementation flexibility, and minimizing unintended impacts on municipal operations.

Bills Enacted into Law

State Building Code:

- **SB3301 / HB8001-A** – State Building Code – Administration and Enforcement
  Sponsor: Sen. Jacob Bissaillon (D) / Rep. K. Joseph Shekarchi (D)
  Summary: Authorizes municipalities to declare a local housing emergency under limited circumstances to allow for the temporary construction and use of SAFE Units, subject to specified exemptions from the state fire and building codes.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal emergency housing response and local building code administration.

Comprehensive Planning & Land Use:

- **SB3302 / HB8004-A** – Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Act
  Sponsor: Sen. Jacob Bissaillon (D) / Rep. Robert Craven, Sr. (D)
  Summary: Makes technical amendments to Rhode Island's comprehensive planning, subdivision, zoning, adaptive reuse, and low- and moderate-income housing statutes.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal planning and land use administration.

Zoning Ordinances:

- **SB3303 / HB8005-A** – Zoning Ordinances
  Sponsor: Sen. Jacob Bissaillon (D) / Rep. Joshua J. Giraldo (D)
  Summary: Amends municipal parking standards and limitations applicable to residential dwelling units.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal zoning regulations and residential development.

Bills Held for Further Study

Affordable Housing Taxation:

- **SB3160 / HB8006-A** – Levy and Assessment of Local Taxes
  Sponsor: Sen. Jacob Bissaillon (D) / Rep. Scott Slater (D)
  Summary: Would have established an eight percent (8%) property tax rate for deed-restricted affordable housing developments serving households at eighty percent (80%) or sixty percent (60%) of the area median income.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal property taxation.

Homelessness:

- **SB3298 / HB8000-A** – Homeless Bill of Rights
  Sponsor: Sen. Tiara Mack (D) / Rep. K. Joseph Shekarchi (D)
  Summary: Would have established procedures governing the removal or relocation of homeless encampments.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal enforcement and public health responsibilities.

Subdivision of Land:

- **SB3299 / HB8007** – Subdivision of Land
  Sponsor: Sen. Jacob Bissaillon (D) / Rep. Stephen M. Casey (D)
  Summary: Would have expanded the definition of minor subdivisions to include qualifying single-family infill subdivisions and established review procedures for those developments.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal land development review.

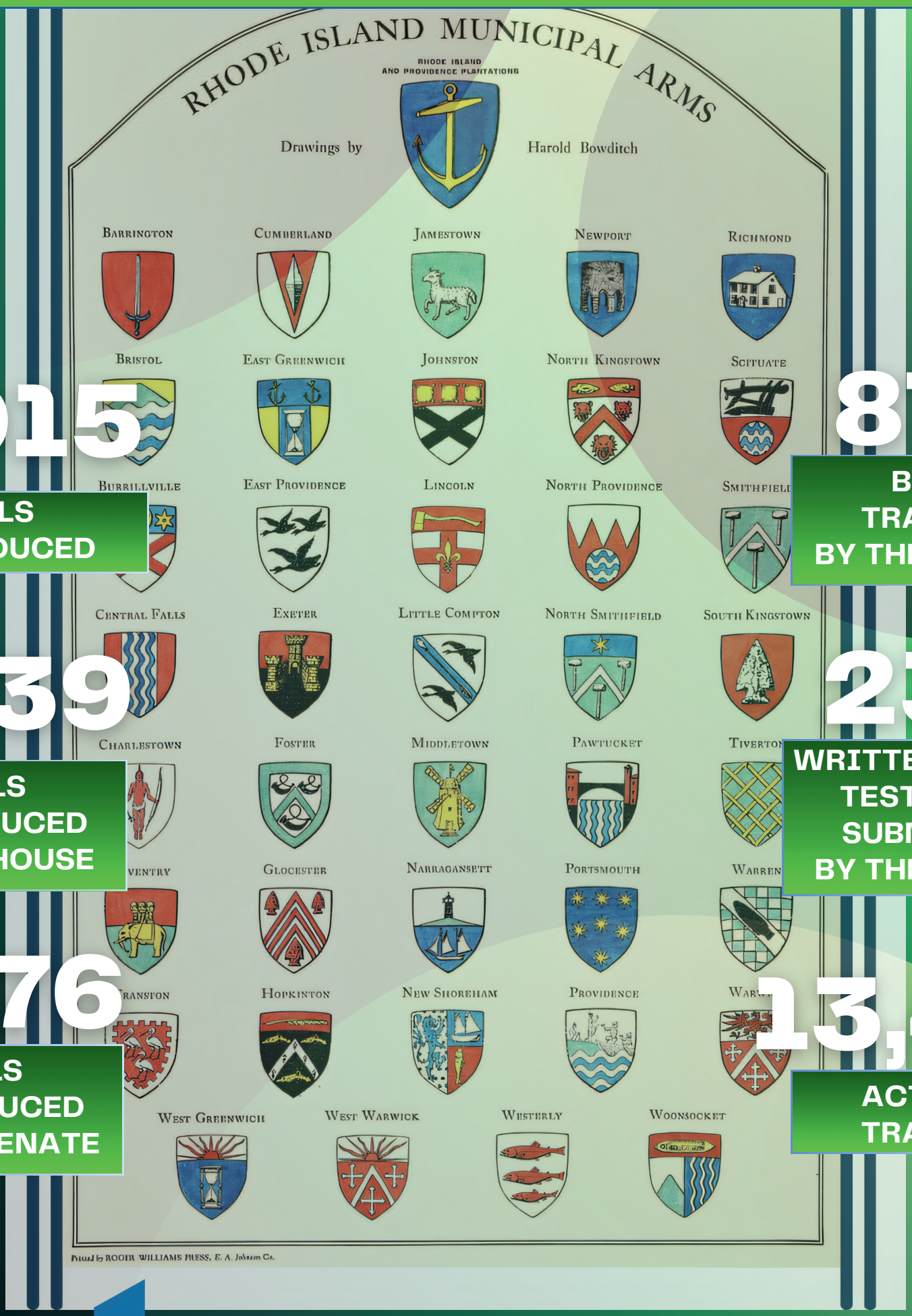
Comprehensive Planning & Land Use:

- **SB3300 / HB8003-A** – Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Act
  Sponsor: Sen. Jacob Bissaillon (D) / Rep. Thomas Noret (D)
  Summary: Would have amended provisions governing adaptive reuse projects on state-owned property and the conditions applicable to those projects.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on municipal planning and redevelopment.

State Building Code:

- **HB8002** – State Building Code
  Sponsor: Rep. June Speakman (D)
  Summary: Would have authorized the construction of certain residential buildings up to four stories and sixteen dwelling units utilizing a single staircase under specified conditions.
  League Perspective: Tracked due to its potential impact on residential building design and local code enforcement.

LEGISLATIVE STATS



3,015
BILLS INTRODUCED

878
BILLS TRACKED BY THE LEAGUE

1,639
BILLS INTRODUCED BY THE HOUSE

239
WRITTEN/VERBAL TESTIMONY SUBMITTED BY THE LEAGUE

1,376
BILLS INTRODUCED BY THE SENATE

13,441
ACTIONS TRACKED

RHODE ISLAND LEAGUE
OF CITIES AND TOWNS