



DESPITE WORKING FULL TIME, A GROWING NUMBER OF RHODE ISLANDERS HAVE TROUBLE MAKING ENDS MEET. ALL OUR NEIGHBORS DESERVE A WARM PLACE TO LIVE, FOOD ON THE TABLE AND AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE.

ONE RHODE ISLAND FY 2007 LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

**A RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT FOR
SUCCESSFUL FAMILIES AND A STRONG ECONOMY**

FEBRUARY 2006

BASIC NEEDS ISSUES IN RHODE ISLAND**ONE RHODE ISLAND PROPOSAL AND HOW IT HELPS****ESTIMATED COST**

Adequate Income and The Family Independence Program. The Family Independence Program serves 24,000 children and provides a monthly benefit of only \$554 a month for a family of three—leaving families at 60 percent below the federal poverty level. Had this benefit which has not been raised since 1989 kept pace with inflation, the current payment would be \$872/month. For these children who live in extreme poverty, one-time payments are critical supplements to a woefully inadequate income. Currently, only children aged 4 and over are eligible for a clothing allowance of just \$30 per year.

Adequate Income. The federal Earned Income Tax Credit has been called the most effective anti-poverty program in the nation. A state EITC supplements the federal credit and is most valuable to families earning income below the federal poverty level.

Rhode Island's minimum wage was last raised in 2004, while the cost of living in the Northeast has been rising by 3.5% per year.

Food Security. Approximately 1 in 10 Rhode Islander households is food insecure – they cannot afford adequate and nutritious food. In 2005, one-third of all food pantry clients had one or more adults in the household working, compared to 23% in 2001. Today, more than 5% of the state's population relies on emergency food pantries every month. An estimated 30,000 Rhode Islanders are eligible for, but not participating, in the federal Food Stamp Program.

Extend the eligibility for a once a year clothing allowance to all children and increase the allowance to \$150. Nearly 24,000 extremely poor children will have access to adequate clothing at the start of the school year.

Reinstate the annual \$100 weatherization for families on cash assistance. Approximately 12,000 households would receive help paying their utility bills.

Increase the state's refundable EITC. Doubling the current refundable state EITC would supplement the wages of the lowest-paid workers in the state.

Raise the minimum wage to \$7.10 in 2006 and \$7.40 in 2007. This could increase the income of poor families by as much as \$728 in 2006 and \$1352 in 2007.

Continue to provide state funding for a food stamp outreach effort. This investment leverages federal matching funds. The USDA estimates that every dollar spent in Food Stamps has a multiplier effect of 1.84. If Rhode Island experiences just a 10% increase in food stamp participation, an additional \$16,524,359 would flow into the state's economy.

\$3,000,000

Coderre (H7129)

Pichardo (S2875)

\$1,200,000

San Bento (H7266)

Sosnowski (S2555)

\$2,700,000**Slater (H7085)****Metts (2375)****\$0**

Lima (H6718)

\$150,000

Naughton (H7218)

Perry (S2574)

| BASIC NEEDS ISSUES IN RHODE ISLAND | ONE RHODE ISLAND PROPOSAL AND HOW IT HELPS | COST |
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| <p>Education and Training. Education and training helps lift families out of poverty and off of welfare. Of 1400 FIP parents tested between July 2004 and June 2005, 32% tested below 6th grade and fully 75% tested below a 12th grade education. A 2001 study showed RI parents receiving education/training had higher paying jobs when leaving FIP (\$11.37/hr) than those who did not (\$8.66/hr). Currently, FIP recipients may count participation in education and training as work only during the first 24 months of their participation.</p> | <p>Allow FIP recipients to combine work with up to 10 hours of education or training to fulfill the 30 hour work requirement. FIP recipients will have increased access to the programs that will help them to secure better wages – a critical component to establishing increased economic security for their families and to leaving FIP.</p> | <p>\$600,000 Dennigan (H7387) Gibbs (2544)</p> |
| <p>Each year children of immigrants who were brought to R.I. by their parents and have worked hard in school have dreams of going to college only to discover that the cost of going to college is beyond their reach. If they are admitted to state institutions of higher education, they are charged out-of-state/international tuition, which is several times the in-state tuition rate. They are not eligible for federal financial aid.</p> | <p>Allow undocumented high school graduates who meet certain criteria to pay in-state tuition at public institutions of higher education. Several states have allowed undocumented high school graduates to pay in-state tuition if they meet certain criteria, affording them the same opportunities as their classmates.</p> | <p>TBD Diaz (H6936) Pichardo (S2838)</p> |
| <p>Affordable, quality child care. Studies indicate that quality child care lays the foundation for cognitive development, self-confidence, and school success. Care for a pre-schooler can cost \$8,060/year—more than the cost of public college tuition in Rhode Island.</p> | <p>Fulfill the promise of the Starting Right child care assistance program: increase the income eligibility from 225% to 250% of the FPL. Families just over 225% of FPL can see child care costs go from 14% to 43% of gross earnings when they become ineligible for a child care subsidy if they work additional hours or receive a promotion.</p> | <p>\$1,300,000 Dennigan (H7220) Roberts (S2521)</p> |
| <p>Working families who need child care so they can attend school or training to increase their earnings are not eligible for child care subsidies.</p> | <p>Allow parents who are working at least 25 hours a week to receive subsidized child care during the time spent in education or training activities.</p> | <p>\$600,000 Naughton (H7289) Levesque (S2318)</p> |
| <p>Affordable health care. Because of RItE Care/RItE Share, the state has the second lowest number of uninsured children in the nation. But since the monthly premiums were increased in 2002, an average of 175 families, including 255 children, lose their coverage each month because they cannot afford the payment.</p> | <p>Roll back the RItE Care premium to 2% of family income. More families will be able to maintain continuous enrollment in RItE Care, assuring uninterrupted access to health care for children. Every \$1 spent by the state on RItE Care/RItE Share leverages federal funds – these investments help support the state’s health care industry, which employs over 9% of the RI workforce.</p> | <p>\$600,000 Handy (H7406) Lanzi (S2518)</p> |

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| <p>Affordable health. Pain caused by dental disease can significantly restrict a child’s ability to perform in school and receive adequate nutrition. About 80% of tooth decay occurs in only 25% of children who are primarily from low-income families. Fewer than half (44%) of children who were enrolled in RItE Care, RItE Share, or Medicaid fee-for-service on September 30, 2005, received a dental service during federal fiscal year 2005.</p> | <p>Increase funding dedicated to dental services for children and elders in nursing homes. Increase reimbursement rates paid by Medical Assistance for dental care provided to low-income children and elderly living in nursing homes and extend the dental benefits manager program to include Medicaid-eligible children over the age of six..</p> | <p>\$2,000,000 Corvese (H7553) Roberts (S2535)</p> |
| <p>Affordable housing. Shelter use is at an all time high in RI with over 200,000 bed nights per year and more than 6,000 individuals experiencing homeless, including more than 1500 children. The average rent for an available 2-bedroom apartment in Rhode Island is \$1,121, requiring an annual income of \$45,000 to be affordable at 30% of income. There is no city or town in Rhode Island where a family earning less than \$50,000 a year can afford a median priced home.</p> | <p>Invest \$7.5 million in the Neighborhood Opportunities Program. Over the last three years, NOP has produced nearly 500 units of affordable housing. \$7.5 million in funding for NOP could generate more than \$45 million in economic activity.</p> | <p>\$7,500,000 Fox (H7262) Pichardo (S2840)</p> |
| <p>The cost of utilities have risen sharply over the past year leaving , jeopardizing the health and housing security of low and modest-income Rhode Islanders.</p> | <p>Continue investing in the supportive services pilot program. Funding is needed to implement Year 2 of this program that helps people with special needs obtain and maintain permanent housing.</p> | <p>\$350,000 Felag (S2263)</p> |
| | <p>Invest in an affordable energy plan that helps low and modest-income families pay for utilities.</p> | <p>TBD</p> |

Estimated Cost of One Rhode Island Proposals: \$20,000,000

One Rhode Island promotes economic security for all Rhode Islanders. The One Rhode Island Coalition advocates for public policies, resources and programs that insure Rhode Islanders can meet their basic needs.



ONE RI DO NO HARM PLATFORM

BUDGET ARTICLE

COST

ARTICLE 14: Child Care Program. Delays provider reimbursement rate increase until 2007.

Delaying the increase in provider reimbursement means that providers will be paid based on 2002 rates, impacting approximately 1,140 child care providers.

ARTICLE 25: RItE Care/RItE Share.

- Reduce eligibility for parents from 185% to 133% of the FPL
- Impose premiums on families at 133% of FPL
- Impose an asset test of \$10,000 for liquid resources
- Increase premiums for families with income above 150% FPL
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These proposed changes will cause 6,800 working adults to lose coverage and require these same families to pay \$42/month for coverage for their children. Raising premiums to 5% of income for families with income above 150% of FPL will mean these 5,000 families will have to pay \$20/month more to keep coverage for their children. RI already has the third highest premiums in the country.

\$11,015,182

Article 40. Eliminate RItE Care for state-funded children (including illegally present and undocumented).

Approximately 3,000 immigrant children, many of whom are in the state legally and under protected status, will lose their RItE Care coverage.

\$4,000,000

Article 32: The Family Independence Program.

- Count benefits received in other states
- Reduce time limit from 60 to 30 months for applicants after July 2007 and limit access to education and training to 12 months (from the current 24 months)
- Reduce benefits every year beginning after 25th month
- Full family sanction at 3 months
- (35 hour plan work requirement)

The proposed changes to the Family Independence Program will in effect dismantle this program that serves very poor children and families. Specifically:

- 3,000 beneficiaries will lose between \$25 and \$80 a month, even when they are complying with program requirements.
- 400 families will lose assistance because of the full family sanction policy, even if they are working full-time.
- Hundreds of parents will be less successful in gaining good jobs if the parent's life time limit is reduced from 60 to 30 months and access to education and training is limited to 12 months.
- 2,000 families who needed cash assistance in another state will have their payments reduced by at least \$80/month and the parent will not have access to education or training

\$5,964,000

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BUDGET ARTICLE

COST

Article 20. Independent Living.

Currently, children who are in the custody of DCYF are provided with services through the age of 21 to help them become independent young adults. The Governor's budget proposes to drop the age to 19, affecting youth in the coming year and many more thereafter.

ARTICLE 12. Employment Plan as a Condition of Eligibility.

The Governor has proposed making receipt of cash assistance contingent on applicants signing an employment plan. This presents additional barriers to families who are in crisis and will waste staff time and resources on developing plans for applicants who may not be eligible and/or who may not be certain about their interests or abilities at the time of application. This change would take effect in May of 2006 if approved.

\$1,453,215

