

## Annual RI Land and Water Conservation Summit 2016

# Understanding the RI Legislative Process and Status of Conservation Commissions in RI

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# Summary

- Basic process of the legislative process in RI ; General legislative timeline...being prepared
- Creating a new bill; Finding a good sponsor; Key role of Legislative Council; Committee process
- Tracking a bill using the legislative information system
- Rhode Island's aquaculture legislation as an exemplar of a Green Economy Bill turned into RI Law



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# Basic Process of Legislation

- Basic Process: [How a Bill Becomes Law in Rhode Island](#)
- Many of the ‘fine points’ are in the Rules --- “*good fortune favors the well-prepared*” – Louis Pasteur  
[2015-2016 RI House Rules](#)
- Legislative calendar --- “*being at the right place at the right time*” [RI Legislative Calendar](#)

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# Creating a new bill



- Getting familiar with existing laws: [Rhode Island General Laws](#)
- Conservation Commissions:
  - [Current Authorizing Legislation](#)
  - [Environmental Advocacy Act](#)
- Looking at other bills for structure:
  - [Example House Resolution -- Rep. Azzinaro Westerly 2012](#)
  - [Example of simple House Bill -- Rep. Flaherty et al. 2004](#)
  - [Example complex House Bill --- Rep. Rice et al. 2010](#)
- Looking at efforts in other states:  
[National Conference of State Legislatures](#)
- Other model legislation? What's your experience?

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# Finding Legislative Sponsors

- Best to have ***identical*** House and Senate “companion bills”
- Finding an interested sponsors for your legislation:
  - Checking Committee Memberships
  - Looking for "best fit" legislator
- After the bill is drafted, your sponsor will look for co-sponsors
- Who are some good “green” legislators in your experience?

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# Role of Legislative Council

- Sponsoring legislator must submit draft bills to Legislative Council
- Complex legislation frequently assigned to staff attorney for research work & drafting
- Draft bill will be sent to requesting legislator for review & introduction ---- ***critical point!***
- Bill is introduced on floor
  - Regular introduction
  - After deadline introduction per Rules

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## After Bill Introduction

- Bill assigned to committee
- Check bill status online: [Checking Committee Bill Inventory](#)
- Written testimony on bill accepted
- Legislator must file “request for hearing” paperwork with Committee Clerk
  - Get supporters ready for hearing
  - Committee Chairman will set date of hearing
  - 3 days notice of hearing

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# The Committee Hearing

- Work with your bill sponsor to “manage” your testimony --- *“90% of success is just showing up”* – Woody Allen
- Committee chairman will determine order of testimony from sign-in sheet
- Short and concise; avoid repetition; keep it interesting; most detailed info should be in writing
- Listen opposition testimony for possible bill revisions
- Bills rarely voted on in first hearing

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## After the Committee Hearing

- Conduct a post-hearing debriefing session with your bill sponsor
- Simple bills often amended in committee
  - Sponsor works with objectors on concerns
  - Sponsor works with committee chairman on substitute
  - Chairman requests sub-a legislation drafted by Legislative Council w/ sponsor consent
- Bills acted on upon request of sponsor & chairman

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## Possible Actions by Committee

- Vote down in committee
- Hold for further study (fate of many complex bills)
- Vote out of committee and on to floor with endorsement
- Vote out of committee and on to floor w/o endorsement

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# To the Floor and Beyond

- Committee Chairman manages bill on floor; sponsor ready to answer questions
- Vote, passage, transmittal to other chamber
- Committee process again
- Floor process again
- Passage and transmittal to governor



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**Thank You**  
**Hope you Enjoyed the Summit**  
**and Keep Thinking Big with Us at URI!**

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