

UNDER THE DOME

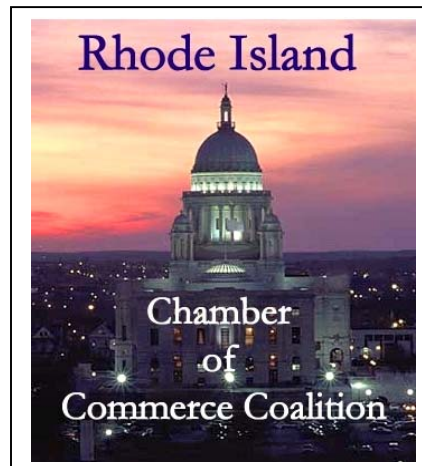
News from the Rhode Island State House

“Your source for Government Affairs information”

*A publication of the
Central Rhode Island, Cranston, East Bay,
East Greenwich, East Providence Area, Narragansett,
Newport County, North Central, Northern Rhode Island,
North Kingstown, Pawtuxet Valley, South Kingstown
& Greater Westerly-Pawcatuck
Chambers of Commerce*

Serving a combined 12,500 member businesses

February 22, 2008



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Featured in this issue

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The proposed Fiscal Year 2009 State of Rhode Island Budget

The General Assembly took its annual Winter Recess this week. Upon return next week, the House of Representatives Finance Committee will begin their work at airing out piece by piece (or as it is officially known, article by article) the proposed Fiscal Year 2009 State Budget. This is the budget as proposed by Governor Donald Carcieri. Your Chamber of Commerce Coalition would like to present a few items that we hope will be of interest regarding the proposed state budget. First, below you will find a link to the actual proposed Fiscal Year 2009 State Budget as submitted in legislation. Second, you will find a link to an Executive Summary of the submitted budget. Last, a link to an analysis of the document as compiled by the Rhode Island House of Representatives Fiscal Staff.

[2009 State Budget bill](#)

[2009 Budget Executive Summary](#)

[Budget analysis](#)

The Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce Coalition

is pleased to present you with our:

2008 Business (Legislative) Agenda

- **Budget & Taxation**

The Chamber of Commerce Coalition supports responsible budget and taxation policy crafted to provide short term and long term fiscal responsibility and sustainability, allow Rhode Island businesses to remain competitive, and preserve necessary services for the businesses and citizens of Rhode Island.

- **Health Care**

The Chamber of Commerce Coalition supports legislative and regulatory efforts that ensure access to and reasonable affordability and good quality and delivery of, health care and health insurance in Rhode Island.

- **Workforce Development & Education
and Business Protection & Workplace Laws**

The Chamber of Commerce Coalition supports measures designed to adequately provide for a competent, well-trained and skilled workforce, while guaranteeing employers' rights to conduct business in a manner consistent with free market principles.

- **Regulatory Affairs**

The Chamber of Commerce Coalition supports fair, equitable, consistent and reasonable government regulation, creating an environment that affords businesses the opportunity to conduct trade in a responsible manner.

- **Water/Energy/Environment**

The Chamber of Commerce Coalition supports controlled measures that guarantee a sufficient supply of water and other public utilities at a reasonable cost, while responsibly preserving our unique natural resources.

- **Ethics**

The Chamber of Commerce Coalition supports strong ethical standards for government and business, and compliance with ethics laws and regulations.

Rhode Island Fire Safety Code Board of Appeal & Review regulatory changes

The Chamber of Commerce Coalition has for the past sixteen months or so been one of the most active organizations in the state regarding the issue of the Fire Safety Code. Every Chamber leader in the Chamber Coalition and many of our individual member businesses have presented testimony to a special House of Representatives Oversight Commission to monitor the ramifications of the State Fire Safety Code. Subsequently, Chamber Coalition lobbyists presented testimony in favor of legislation that was introduced by the Oversight Commission's co-chairs, [former] Representative Peter Ginaitt and Representative Joseph Trillo. The legislation passed the House Finance Committee and the full House of Representatives toward the end of the General Assembly's normal legislative session in June 2007. The legislation was not taken up by the Senate at that time. Although a disappointment to many in the Chamber Coalition, Senate leaders assured that the Senate would conduct their own due diligence on the issue and act appropriately.

Between the months of July 2007 and October 2007, Representatives Ginaitt and Trillo, Governor Carcieri, and the Chamber of Commerce Coalition, recommended that the Rhode Island Fire Safety Code Board of Appeal and Review institute through its own regulatory power many of the provisions found in the House legislation. Indeed, **the Board is now recommending many of those changes.** The Board worked for many weeks drafting the changes. The Rhode Island Senate did its part to deal with the issue as well. The Senate Housing & Municipal Government Committee held a hearing at which the Executive Director and Chairman of the Fire Safety Code Board of Appeal and Review as well as the State Fire Marshall, detailed the regulatory changes that the Board was recommending. As required by law, a public hearing process on the changes will take place prior to final approval. However, **the Chamber Coalition is very pleased to say that many of the changes we have been advocating for could be in place by April.** Please see the Chamber Coalition's positions below. Highlighted in blue are the Chamber Coalition recommendations that the Fire Safety Code Board of Appeal and Review appears ready to institute.

The Chamber of Commerce Coalition believes:

- The safety and well being of Rhode Islanders and all who visit our state is fundamental.
- The Fire Safety Code interpretation and enforcement should be universal and consistent.
- The Code should be amended to allow 4 years from the date of notice to a business by a local fire marshal that the business is not compliant with the code, for a business to come into compliance with the code.
- The Code should be amended to mandate that the local Fire Marshal's office notify businesses that it is the right of the business to apply for an appeal before the RI Fire Safety Code Board of Appeals. This notification of appeal right should be issued in writing by the local Fire Marshal's office to the business and should be signed by the local Fire Marshal (or representative) and the business owner.
- The Code should be amended to prohibit the state and municipalities from withholding licenses from businesses based on non-compliance with the Fire Safety Code, if the business is in the process of an appeal with the Fire Safety Code Board of Appeals.

- The Code should be amended to [allow a broader based group of sprinkler/alarm installers](#). (This may mean amending the apprentice regulations in the state, allowing for a much larger group of recognized installers.)
- A fund should be established (administered by the state or one which the state has oversight responsibilities for) to provide guaranteed low interest financing to businesses that are subject to the code. The financing should be available to businesses that have already complied or those that still need to comply.
- State tax credits should be made available for businesses that comply with the code.

Where will your Chamber of Commerce Coalition be at the State House next week?

DATE	COMMITTEE	TIME	PLACE
Tuesday, February 26, 2008	House Corporations	4:30 P.M.	Room 203- State House
Tuesday, February 26, 2008	House Finance	1:00 P.M.	Room 35- State House
Wednesday, February 27, 2008	House Health, Education & Welfare	4:30 P.M.	Room 135- State House
Wednesday, February 27, 2008	House Finance	1:00 P.M.	Room 35- State House
Wednesday, February 27, 2008	Senate Health & Human Services	4:30 P.M.	Room 212- State House
Thursday, February 28, 2008	House Finance	1:00 P.M.	Room 35- State House

2008 Legislative Reception is right around the corner

*The Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce Coalition
cordially invite you to attend our annual...*

Legislative Reception

Thursday, March 6th 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Rhode Island State House (Governor's State Room and State House Rotunda)

Hors d'oeuvres and complimentary bar available

\$15.00 per person - Contact the East Providence Area Chamber of Commerce for reservations

Free valet parking at Smith Street entrance

This evening provides members with the opportunity to discuss issues –in an informal setting- with state legislators and elected officials from throughout the state. We hope you will join us.

Remember: The Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce Coalition is [your](#) voice at the Rhode Island State House.

If you have any concerns, questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you for your continued support and interest.