

RHODE ISLAND POLITICS IN 2022:
MOVING FORWARD DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC¹

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On March 1, 2020, Governor Gina Raimondo and Director of Health Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott addressed Rhode Islanders in their first of many daily news conferences related to the COVID-19 pandemic. They announced the discovery of the first case of COVID-19 in Rhode Island and reassured the public not to panic. In a matter of weeks, the state faced an economic crisis due to the sudden shutdown of businesses along with a major loss of jobs. Rhode Islanders experienced seismic shifts in their everyday lives as the state implemented COVID-19 related regulations that disrupted work, school, religious and leisure activities. Two and a half years later, over three thousand Rhode Islanders lost their lives due to COVID-19 associated fatalities, with the highest age-adjusted COVID-19 fatality rates among groups of Hispanics, Blacks, and Asians.ⁱ The state continues to deal with the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic in the midst of a highly polarized national political climate marked by a divisive presidential election and protests across the country calling for racial justice. The governor, General Assembly members, and other political leaders continue to make difficult decisions to address dire economic, political, and social issues such as high inflation, the distribution of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, racial justice, climate change, employment, and housing.

This report gives a general overview of the current state of Rhode Island politics in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic where Rhode Island political leaders recently made

¹ This report provides an overview and update of some of the key points from the forthcoming book, *The State of Rhode Island: Politics and Government*, co-edited by Maureen Moakley and Emily Lynch.

important political, structural, and policy-oriented reforms. As a result, many of these changes have affected the political landscape by putting the state in a position to take a forward-looking approach by addressing problems that greatly impact the Ocean State – including the interconnecting web of issues related to the environment, energy, health, education, housing, elections, and equity. The time is right for the smallest state in the union to both lead and catch up with its New England neighbors in a diverse array of current political issues.

I begin by examining recent elections and voting reform. The next section covers Rhode Island as a one-party state. Next, I explain how diversity, equity, and inclusion have become an integral part of the politics in Rhode Island. The final section covers the rising importance of the Governor's office during COVID-19.

2022 Elections and Voting Reform

Low voter participation is a reality in many one-party states like Rhode Island. Overall primary election turnout is dismal, and on average, only about one-third of the general election voters participate in the primary. About 135,000 Rhode Islanders voted in the 2022 gubernatorial primary, making this primary turnout lower than the past two gubernatorial primary elections. Most of these voters participated in the Democratic primary; only about 15% of the voters participated on the Republican side.ⁱⁱ

The lack of voter participation is especially noteworthy given that the recent 2022 primary election featured an open federal seat. It has been over ten years since there was an open seat for Congress in Rhode Island. The Democratic primary included a crowded field with six candidates for the second congressional district. Seth Magaziner, the Treasurer Secretary, won handily with 54% of the vote. On the Republican side, former mayor of Cranston Allan Fung

won an uncontested primary election, further underscoring another negative feature of Rhode Island politics – the lack of competition in elections. In the recent RI Senate primaries, 45 of the 64 races were uncontested as well as eleven Republican primary elections and one Democratic primary election that were not held because there were no candidates. In the House primaries, 88 out of 112 races were uncontested and no elections were held for thirty-six Republican seats and two Democratic seats. The lack of competitiveness permeates throughout both primary and general elections. It is not unusual to see this lack of competition for state legislative seats. In 2020, Rhode Island had the fourth highest percentage of uncontested seats in federal and state elections.ⁱⁱⁱ A majority of races (59% in the House and 55% in the Senate) were uncontested that year. Perhaps there was an emphasis on recruitment because the approximate percentage of uncontested seats in the 2022 general election (36% in the House and 26% in the Senate) indicates an increase in the level of competition.

COVID-19 became a catalyst for improving voter accessibility in Rhode Island where voters now have multiple ways to cast their votes. Governor Dan McKee signed legislation into law in June 2022 that made permanent the temporary changes to the voting procedure adopted under COVID-19. This new law provides greater access to the ballot with early voting up to twenty days before the election. It may take several election cycles to assess the impact of the new voting law. During the 2020 statewide primaries, 8% of voters cast their vote early.^{iv} Compare this to 12% of the early voters in the 2022 primary election, indicating only a slight increase in the percentage of early voters. In the general elections, early voting dropped from 29% in 2020 to 20% in 2022.

The recent legislation also included mail ballot reforms. These reforms include the following: use of online mail ballot applications for no excuse mail ballots, the requirement for a

mail ballot drop box in each municipality, and the removal of the cumbersome voter signature verification procedure of requiring mail ballots to be notarized or signed by two witnesses. Comparing pre-COVID-19 mail primary voting (5% in 2018) to post-COVID-19 mail primary voting (13% in 2022), the small percentage of mail ballot voters has doubled, yet during COVID-19 in 2020, 41% of the votes were cast by mail when the motivation was high to avoid large gatherings.^v In the general election, mail ballot voting dropped from 33% in 2020 to 9% in 2022, which is similar to pre-COVID voting levels (7% in 2018).

Interesting voting patterns emerged during the 2022 primary election. During the gubernatorial primary, Governor Dan McKee and challengers Helena Foulkes and Secretary Nellie Gorbea each gained roughly the same amount of early votes. Some argue that Foulkes gained support late in the campaign due to strong debate performances, as evidenced by the fact that more votes were cast for Foulkes than McKee at the polls on election day. However, McKee had an advantage with the mail ballots that led to a victory in the primary election.

In a press release when the Let RI Vote Act was signed into law, one of the bill's sponsors stated that "removing the roadblocks that discourage voter participation brings our elections closer to what they are supposed to be — the opportunity for all Americans to have their say in their government." Yet, while voting reform may provide more options for how to vote, research on early voting indicates there is little evidence of a mobilization effect due to access to early voting since voters using other options tend to be core voters who consistently vote.^{vi} Early voters tend to be white, older, and more politically knowledgeable than election day voters.^{vii} Other reforms, such as same day registration, may be better alternatives to increase turnout, at least for younger voters.^{viii} Voters would have to approve a constitutional amendment to implement this change since the constitution only allows same day registration in presidential

elections. Recent legislation was introduced in 2022 to address this issue, but it was held for further study in both chambers. Advocates argue that Rhode Island should implement this reform since the Ocean State and Massachusetts are the only New England states without same day registration.

Primaries are an important mechanism for selecting high quality candidates, especially in states like Rhode Island that are dominated by one party.^{ix} The governor's race tends to be competitive by attracting more Democratic candidates, thus decreasing the percentage of the vote for the ultimate winner. For example, Governor Dan McKee won the primary with only 32.8% of the vote in a crowded field with four other challengers. Similarly, Gina Raimondo won with less than a majority of the vote against three challengers (42.1%) in the 2014 gubernatorial primary election. On the Republican side, Ashley Kalus, facing only one challenger, easily won her primary election with over 80% of the vote in 2022. In the general election, Governor McKee won handily with 57.9% of the votes. Overall voter turnout declined in the gubernatorial general election by about 18,000 votes from 2018 to 2022.

In the primaries for other statewide general office seats, the current incumbent lieutenant governor, Democrat Sabina Matos won with 47.1% of the vote in a field with two other candidates. The other primary winners for statewide offices gained a majority of the votes.^x Four of the statewide office primary elections were uncontested even though these high-profile seats can be a springboard for a higher office such as the governor's seat or a U.S. congressional seat. In the general election, all the Democratic candidates won the statewide offices, each candidate garnering between 51-61% of the total votes.

When candidates get less than a majority of the vote in elections (such as McKee and Matos in the primaries), concerns are raised about the legitimacy of electing candidates with

such low support. Some Republican and Democratic leaders in the General Assembly are interested in reforming the primary voting system. In 2022 the Senate passed legislation to create a special senate commission to study ranked choice voting and runoff elections for primary elections in the General Assembly and statewide executive offices.

The State of Party Politics in Rhode Island

Rhode Island continues to remain a Democratic stronghold for federal and state offices even though most residents are registered as unaffiliated. The Democratic presidential candidate tends to win about 60% of the vote in the state. U.S. senators Jack Reed and Sheldon Whitehouse have enjoyed over 60% of support in each of their respective elections from 2008 through 2020. In 2020, U.S. House representative David Cicilline did not face a Republican challenger and won with 70% of the vote. Representative Jim Langevin (who recently retired) enjoyed strong support with an average of 65% of the vote over the past two decades. No Republican has won a statewide office since 2006, although Lincoln Chafee won as an independent in the gubernatorial election in 2010. Currently, only 9 of the 75 state representatives and 5 of the 38 senators are Republican.

The large percentage of unaffiliated voters is one reason why moderate political candidates seem to fare well in the state. The General Assembly consists of some Democrats who would be considered a Republican in many other states. Public opinion polls corroborate the registration rolls where at least 80% of Rhode Islanders identify themselves as Democrats or independent, highlighting the uphill battle that Republican candidates face when running for office in Rhode Island. Although the total percentage of Democratic votes is high, if we take a closer look at the voting totals based on municipality, Donald Trump won 14 of 39 municipalities in 2016. Compare this to 2000 election results where George W. Bush won only

two municipalities. This meaningful level of support for a Republican presidential candidate at the municipal level indicates that there are pockets of Republican supporters across the state.

The Rhode Island Democratic party has recently shown signs of instability due to intra-party competition. One indication of intra-party conflict was when the Democratic Women's caucus was established after the Democratic State Committee chose to back a Trump supporter instead of a woman Democratic incumbent. Organizations like the RI Political Cooperative was created to elect progressive legislators and provide working class people the resources to run for office, often against candidates of the Democratic establishment. The Working Families Party, another progressive organization focused on the minimum wage and criminal justice reform, organized a chapter in RI in 2016. They, too, tend to endorse more progressive candidates to challenge the Democratic establishment in the state. However, the more progressive gubernatorial candidates in the 2022 Democratic primary did not prevail. Instead, Governor McKee, an establishment Democrat, was the Democratic nominee and eventual winner. One might consider the rise of a third party due to the resistance to the Democratic establishment and lack of support for Republican candidates, but attempts like the recent Moderate Party have quickly met their demise due to the difficulty in garnering a high enough percentage of votes to remain an officially recognized party.

The two most powerful legislative leaders – the Speaker of the House and Senate President – are more conservative Democrats, especially on cultural issues, which means that Rhode Island is not a leader but a follower of other progressive states. For example, Rhode Island just legalized recreational marijuana, which is legal in all other New England states except New Hampshire. The General Assembly has also followed progressive states in other social issues such as reproductive rights. In 2019, the Reproductive Privacy Act (RPA) codified

abortion protections that were guaranteed under *Roe v. Wade*, yet Connecticut and Maine have had state laws protecting abortion since the 1990s. In 2022, the Rhode Island Supreme Court rejected a challenge to the new RPA law. Yet, the state is considered conservative in some areas of reproductive rights since there is no public funding for abortion for state workers and those on Medicaid. Rhode Island and New Hampshire are the only two New England states that follow the Hyde restrictions, where the rest of New England as well as 12 other states use their own funds to pay for abortions under Medicaid.^{xi} Legislation to expand this coverage did not pass in recent years, with resistance coming from pro-life Democratic leaders and a call to discuss the financial implications of the Equality in Abortion Coverage Act. In September 2022, Governor McKee included funds to provide abortion coverage for state workers and Medicaid recipients in his initial set of budget requests, thus indicating that he is supporting this legislation.

The current Speaker of the House Joe Shekarchi, a Democrat who is considered more moderate than his predecessor, included progressive leaders on his team. Yet, no large progressive shift has occurred with taxing and spending, perhaps due to the recent amount of federal relief funds for COVID-19. While there is a clear progressive movement, the traditional establishment Democrats prevailed in the 2022 primaries. While Rhode Island is unlikely to become a leader of progressive states for some issues, Rhode Island is clearly a leader on environmental issues.

Environmental policy is one area where the state has been a progressive leader. Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut were among the first group of states to launch a program to curb pollution and invest in cleaner transportation options in 2020 through the Transportation Climate Initiative program. The Act on Climate, signed into law by Governor McKee in 2021, aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transition the state to a low carbon economy. With

400 miles of shoreline, rising sea-levels are a concern. Rhode Island has been a national leader in investing in cities and towns to mitigate the effect of climate change.^{xii} Rhode Island was the first in the country to place wind turbines off the coast of Block Island. The Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank has been a leader in climate change mitigation by providing millions of dollars in grants through the Municipal Resilience Program to implement projects to increase climate resilience. The state has worked with local municipalities to come up with appropriate legislation to deal with the growing need to support alternative forms of energy. Rhode Island leaders also recognize that solar siting can be controversial, especially when forests are cleared for solar projects.

Rhode Islanders are somewhat insulated from national levels of political polarization due to the local nature of the news media. Local news sources continue to thrive on the Internet, TV, and radio. In the forthcoming book, *The State of Rhode Island: Politics and Government*, Rob Horowitz states that Rhode Island has a “relatively robust local news market especially as compared to most of the rest of the local media markets in the rest of the nation.” Perhaps the continued popularity of local news media was driven in part by the necessity to pay attention to COVID-19 press conferences. Local TV news, radio, and online sources have helped the state remain informed, especially since the only major state newspaper, *The Providence Journal*, has lost its influence over time due to low print circulation and the implementation of cost-cutting initiatives.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion in Rhode Island Politics

In 2020, University of Rhode Island student Tyson Pianka started a petition to change the state’s name by eliminating “Providence Plantations” due to its negative connotations related to slavery. Historians disagreed about the connection to slavery, stating that plantations were in

reference to the first settlements in and around Providence. The General Assembly agreed to add a question about the name change on the 2020 ballot. Rhode Islanders decided to shorten the name, even though only ten years earlier voters had largely disapproved of the name change. Perhaps Rhode Islanders, amidst the 2020 rallies in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, recognized the value of moving forward due to evolving social norms.

COVID-19 has increased the awareness of systemic racism, and state leaders have taken measures to address issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. For example, the COVID-19 Equity Council was created as an advisory panel to address the impact of COVID-19 and systemic racism on high density areas, poor neighborhoods, and communities of color. In July 2021, The COVID-19 Equity Council transitioned from the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to the Lieutenant Governor's office. Time will tell whether this was the appropriate move and how the Council will continue to address equity beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

Leadership positions across the branches of government are becoming more diverse, leading to a more inclusive political environment in the state. In 2014, Rhode Island elected Gina Raimondo, the first woman governor in Rhode Island. Recent executive statewide positions held by women include Lieutenant Governor Sabina Matos (appointed to the position when Governor McKee took over for Raimondo) and former Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea. Both women have broken intersectional barriers based on gender and race and ethnicity in their respective leadership positions: Matos is the first Dominican American in the United States to serve as a lieutenant governor and Gorbea is the first Hispanic to be elected to statewide office in New England.^{xiii} Dr. Nicole Alexander Scott, the first woman of color to serve as the director of the Department of Health, was a transformational leader during COVID-19. Angelica Infante-Green,

appointed Commissioner of Education in 2019, is the first Latina and woman of color to hold this role. The Rhode Island Supreme Court has a majority women bench with recent appointments of Melissa Long, the first woman of color to serve on the State Supreme Court, and former state senator Erin Lynch Prata. Although the state judicial branch has not reached gender parity for judicial officers, the percentage of women and racial minorities has continued to grow.^{xiv} Rhode Island's General Assembly has almost reached gender parity and currently has the seventh highest percentage of women legislators (44.2%) across all the states.^{xv} However, the state is far from racial parity among state legislators since nearly 40% of the Rhode Island population are non-white and about 9% of the state legislators identify as black, Latino, or multi-racial.^{xvi} The recent increase in leadership roles for women, especially women of color, Hispanics, and Latinas, suggests that Rhode Islanders are actively taking steps to improve diversity and inclusion in state politics.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion can be addressed in several ways. One way is to promote diversity is by supporting descriptive representation. Rhode Island is making progress with an increase in the percentage of women of color and Latinas who are serving in leadership positions across the state. In addition, Rhode Island leaders can seek to address equity in public policy, as highlighted by environmental, energy, and education policy.

Recent environmental and energy issues highlight equity issues in the state. For example, plans to build a power plant in Burrillville failed due to immense local and group opposition, but plans were approved for a LNG facility in South Providence that was also opposed by local communities, which affected low-income and minority populations. The high cost of energy is another concern. National Grid sold its Rhode Island accounts to Rhode Island Energy, which is implementing a 47% hike in costs in the fall of 2022.^{xvii} Although McKee is offering short-term

help to those in need, this will negatively impact Rhode Islanders, especially low-income populations in the state.

Equity in K-12 education is another current problem in the state. Rhode Island, unlike most states, has not yet acknowledged that education is a fundamental right. For years there has been a concerted effort in the General Assembly to take steps for education to become a constitutional right. To further highlight the high level of education inequity in the state, the decision was made for a state takeover of the Providence schools due to major failures in the school system. Recently, members of the General Assembly passed legislation in 2022 to implement measures of oversight and end the school takeover in 2024.

Equity in schools can be supported in various ways. McKee put nearly 20 million dollars of American Rescue Plan Act money into state childcare initiatives which benefit early education. In 2021, Governor McKee signed legislation into law that requires civic education proficiency for high school graduation.^{xviii} In addition, Rhode Island became the fourth state to implement a new law that requires elementary and secondary schools to teach Asian American history.^{xix}

In 2021, the state saw a large decline in student performance in state standardized test scores in all districts.^{xx} The 2022 state scores were lower than pre-pandemic levels as well. These low levels in English and math proficiencies indicate many of the current students in the K-12 system need additional support. Student learning losses due to the pandemic need to be addressed and there is no clear plan. McKee's initial plan for dealing with learning losses due to the pandemic ended in controversy when McKee awarded a state contract to a consulting group with ties to one of McKee's close advisors.^{xxi} McKee and state leaders missed the window of opportunity to implement far-reaching solutions right away. Governor McKee, in his 2023 State

of the State Address, emphasized that it will take time to recover from the education loss due to the pandemic, but it remains a priority for his administration.

Rhode Island Leadership and COVID-19

Governors are evaluated on their leadership skills when a disaster or unanticipated event occurs. Governor Raimondo effectively managed the COVID-19 crisis when it began, exercising broad powers by declaring a public health emergency and enforcing mask mandates, social distancing, and limiting gathering sizes. The public became more critical of the Governor in the months before being officially nominated as the new Commerce Secretary when Raimondo's communication with the state declined. Raimondo, considered a more pragmatic leader, was criticized by unions for her pension reform in her past role as General Treasurer. Raimondo was succeeded by McKee, who has gained support from unions but has been criticized for some of his own actions so far, such as giving bonuses to state employees. Governor McKee has had multiple opportunities to showcase his leadership skills by shaping the agenda through introducing budget proposals for ARPA funds. Outside groups can influence political leaders as well. Reputable think tanks like the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council and Economic Progress Institute, along with non-profit philanthropic organizations like the Rhode Island Foundation, have offered recommendations of how to use the ARPA funding.

Recent problems in the state range from economic to social equity issues, including helping small businesses, improving labor force training and retention, providing affordable health care and housing, and promoting diversity and inclusion across the state. McKee's plans involve dealing with these issues, and he will be judged on his effectiveness and efficiency in implementing new programs and laws. McKee is in an optimal position to work with his agencies to use the pandemic funds in innovative ways to promote further long-term growth in

the state. Governor McKee's budget proposal highlighted how housing was one of his top priorities. Indeed, McKee signed legislation into law that put a quarter of a million dollars into housing investment and created a Department of Housing with a focus on low to moderate income housing.^{xxii} McKee's "Back to Business" initiative used Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds to provide grants to employers to incentivize new hires. Rhode Island is expected to receive nearly 7 billion dollars in federal COVID-19 relief through CARES, ARPA, and other COVID-19 relief measures. These funds are important for addressing issues directly related to COVID-19 and other issues that had been placed on the backburner but highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. McKee must be careful that these temporary funds do not "lead to unsustainable spending commitments."^{xxiii} It will be interesting to see how these one-time funds change spending patterns over the next several years.

Rhode Island was successful with their coordinated response to the COVID-19 pandemic, where nearly all Rhode Islanders were partially vaccinated. It is especially important to note that Rhode Island was one of the few states where nearly all nursing home staff were vaccinated. Yet COVID-19 has underscored the imperative to address long-term problems such as the closure of nursing homes and nursing home staffing shortages.^{xxiv} In 2021, Governor Dan McKee signed the nation's strictest staffing law for nursing homes. There was a temporary suspension to the law since the nursing homes were unable to fill the staff positions. The Governor and General Assembly must continue to deal with this problem in the years to come, since the legislature failed to come to an agreement in 2022 to address these nursing home issues.

An elected statewide officer like the attorney general can be a powerful leader in the state, especially when they focus on their own agenda separate from the governor's initiatives. The Attorney General's office is taking an active and forward-looking approach to state politics.

The Attorney General, well known for work in criminal matters, has expanded its executive powers by emphasizing advocacy units with less commonly known responsibilities, such as dealing with environmental and health care issues. Recently, under the leadership of Attorney General Peter Neronha, the office has been involved with highly publicized cases like the denial of the proposal to merge the largest hospital groups in the state. In 2022, under the direction of Attorney General Neronha, the state reached several settlements that will provide millions of dollars of funding to address the opioid crisis in all municipalities.

One future consideration is whether the legislative-executive balance has shifted due to COVID-19. The Rhode Island legislature is one of the strongest in the country since the governor lacks the power of the line-item veto and the General Assembly can override a veto with only 3/5s of a vote in each chamber. During COVID-19, the Governor's Office broadened its powers by issuing executive orders to manage state affairs during the state of emergency. Evidence shows that the Rhode Island governors had one of the highest numbers of executive orders related to the pandemic out of all the states, and the General Assembly did little to question this power, which may "raise the possibility that Rhode Island government may be transitioning to a new era in legislative-executive relations, one defined by the dominance of the executive."^{xxv}

There is a growing recognition of the need for the Governor and General Assembly to work together and compromise to get things done. Yet, there is always room for credit-taking to explicitly state who first introduced a policy. For example, Governor McKee claims credit for a section of the marijuana law in his press release where he states that his "administration's original legalization plan also included such a provision and I am thrilled that the Assembly recognized the importance of this particular issue."^{xxvi} Governor McKee is also willing to call out the Legislature if he feels they are usurping executive power. This occurred when McKee

expressed concerns about the appointment procedure of the cannabis control commission. He argued it was an overreach of power of the General Assembly because originally he could only appoint members recommended by the Speaker and Senate President.^{xxvii} The final legislation allowed McKee to make two choices of his own and another based on a recommended list from the speaker, all with the advice and consent of the senate.

Independently Moving Forward in Rhode Island Politics

Rhode Island has just experienced a pandemic that has triggered an immense effort by the governor to lead our state out of economic, social, and political crises. COVID-19 has motivated leaders to rethink our voting system as well as our system of checks and balances among the branches of government. Furthermore, COVID-19 has helped to raise awareness of the political inequities that continue to prevail in the state. If the political leaders remain true to the independent political nature of Rhode Island politics, the state can become a beacon for other states in addressing some of the economic, political, and social issues that permeate Rhode Island and the nation.

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ⁱⁱⁱ "Election results, 2020: Uncontested races by state." Ballotpedia, December 16, 2020. https://ballotpedia.org/Election_results,_2020:_Uncontested_races_by_state

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^{vi} Neeley, Grant W. and Richardson, Lilliard E. (2001). "Who is early voting? An individual level examination." *The Social Science Journal*, 38 (3), 381-392.

^{vii} Shino, Enrijeta and Smith, Daniel. (2022) "Political knowledge and convenience voting." *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, 32:2, 408-428.

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^{viii} Grumbach, Jacob M. and Hill, Charlotte. (2022). Rock the Registration: Same Day Registration Increases Turnout of Young Voters. *The Journal of Politics*, 84(1), 405-417.

^{ix} Hirano, Shigeo and Snyder Jr., James M. (2014). "Primary Elections and the Quality of Elected Officials." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 9(4),473-500.

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<https://www.kff.org/medicaid/state-indicator/abortion-under-medicaid/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D#note-3>

^{xii} "Gov. McKee, Mayor Elorza, Environmental Leaders Kick Off Campaign for \$50 Million Green Bond." State of Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, September 27, 2022. <https://dem.ri.gov/press-releases/gov-mckee-mayor-elorza-environmental-leaders-kick-campaign-50-million-green-bond>

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^{xiii} "About Lt. Governor Sabina Matos." Rhode Island Office of the Lieutenant Governor, n.d.

<https://ltgov.ri.gov/about>

"About Secretary Of State Nellie M. Gorbea." Rhode Island Department of State, n.d.

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^{xiv} See *The State of Rhode Island: Politics and Government*, forthcoming book.

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^{xviii} "Governor McKee Signs Legislation on Civics Education in Schools." State of Rhode Island, September 21, 2021. <https://governor.ri.gov/press-releases/governor-mckee-signs-legislation-civics-education-schools>

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^{xxiii} Michael DiBiase. "Taxing and Spending." *The State of Rhode Island: Politics and Government*, forthcoming.

^{xxiv} "Nursing Home Staffing and Quality Care Act signed into law." State of Rhode Island General Assembly, May 27, 2021.

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