



For Immediate Release

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Senate Committee Votes a Resounding ‘YES’ to Advance the Rhode Island Green Amendment to Protect Environmental Rights

Providence, Rhode Island; By a vote of 5 to 1, the Rhode Island State Senate Committee on Environment and Agriculture voted “yes” to advance the proposed Rhode Island Green Amendment (S0327). The constitutional amendment, proposed by State Senator V. Susan Sosnowski, would amend the Rhode Island state constitution’s Declaration of Rights and Principles to recognize and protect the rights of all the people in the state to a clean and healthy environment, a safe climate, and to the preservation of the state’s natural resources for present and future generations. The amendment, if added to the state constitution, would place environmental rights in the state legally on par with other well-recognized fundamental rights such as the rights to free speech and to peaceably assemble, private property rights and freedom of religion.

The amendment would be added to Article 1 of the the state constitution, and would read:

All people in the state of Rhode Island (The Ocean State) have an inherent, inalienable, indefeasible, and self-executing right to clean air, clean water, healthy and uncontaminated soil, a life-supporting climate, and the preservation of the environment's natural, scenic, and recreational values. The state shall serve as trustee of the natural resources of Rhode Island, and shall conserve, protect, and maintain these resources for the benefit of all the people, including both present and future generations. The state shall not infringe upon these rights, and shall protect these rights and Rhode Island’s natural resources equitably for all people regardless of race, ethnicity, gender or socioeconomics.

The constitutional amendment process requires the proposal to be passed by a majority of each of the state’s legislative houses, and then to pass by a majority of the state’s voters. “Success in the senate committee was a key first step in the constitutional amendment process. It is exciting to see our state

legislators recognize the importance of protecting environmental rights,” stated **George Faucher, co-chair of the Green Team at Peace Dale Congregational Church in Wakefield, RI and leader in the Rhode Island Green Amendment movement.**

“States have an important and irreplaceable role when it comes to environmental protection. The importance of state leadership for the environment becomes increasingly important as federal protections are rolled back. Currently 3 states include Green Amendment protections in their state constitutions. With this vote and such swift and strong progress for the proposed constitutional amendment, Rhode Island is now poised to become the fourth state in the nation to give environmental rights highest constitutional standing,” said **Maya van Rossum, Founder of the national Green Amendment movement and organization, [Green Amendments for the Generations](#) and author of The Green Amendment, the People’s Fight For a Clean, Safe & Healthy Environment.**

“So proud of the many Rhode Islanders who came forward to support the Green Amendment,” exclaimed **Don Hermes, co-chair of the Green Team at Peace Dale Congregational Church in Wakefield, RI.**

“The Green Amendment is infinitely important for the health of our children and all generations of Rhode Islanders!” offered **Mary Mitchell Goodman, Founder of Weekapaug Green.**

According to van Rossum, “protecting the environmental rights of the people of Rhode Island is an important compliment to the current right of the people to enjoy and freely exercise their rights to the state’s fishery and shores already found in the state constitution at Article 1, sections 16 and 17. But rather than instruct government officials in the state to regulate and control the use of the state’s natural resources as a means of advancing natural resource protection, the proposed Rhode Island Green Amendment will create a right of the people to a clean, safe and healthy environment and ensures the people of the state can secure the protections they need when existing laws fail to do so.”

Constitutional Green Amendments already exist in Pennsylvania, Montana, and New York, where it is being used to encourage and secure stronger environmental protections. In addition to Rhode Island, constitutional environmental rights proposals that meet the definition of a Green Amendment include: Connecticut, New Jersey, New Mexico, Hawaii, Kentucky, Michigan, Nebraska, North Carolina, Oregon and Texas [along with nearly half a dozen others](#) and more on the way.

Learn more at: www.RIGreenAmendment.org .

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