

LC02171

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2004

JOINT RESOLUTION

**CREATING A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO STUDY THE CURRENT
STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF LIBRARY SERVICES IN THE STATE OF RHODE
ISLAND**

Introduced By: Representatives Dennigan, Malik, Anguilla, and Almeida

Date Introduced: February 11, 2004

Referred To: House Health, Education & Welfare

1 WHEREAS, In the 1980's a study of library services in Rhode Island resulted in the
2 creation of a legislative commission and of legislation that created the Library Board of Rhode
3 Island and the statewide library network, and made major changes in state funding for libraries.
4 Rhode Island needs a systematic plan to study the results of this legislation, evaluate the benefits
5 of multiple types of libraries in the state, and develop policy recommendations to improve library
6 services for all Rhode Islanders as we face the demands of the 21st century; and

7 WHEREAS, More than 500 libraries serve the residents of Rhode Island, including:
8 public libraries, academic libraries, school libraries, and special libraries such as hospital, legal,
9 business, government and institutional libraries; and

10 WHEREAS, Rhode Island residents use different libraries throughout their lives. More
11 than 500,000 Rhode Islanders have library cards. Rhode Islanders use public libraries as
12 preschoolers, as students, as parents, as workers, as lifelong learners, and they use libraries as a
13 place of recreation. They use school and academic libraries as students and special libraries such
14 as institutional, hospital, or corporate libraries as workers. For libraries to meet the changing
15 needs of Rhode Island residents in the future, they must have 21st century, cooperative
16 mechanisms that allow them to connect users with the widest range of possible resources,
17 regardless of which type of library provides this connection; and

18 WHEREAS, The state's demographics have significantly changed since the last
19 comprehensive study of library services. Effective library programs provide services to people of

1 all cultures, economic status, age, gender and physical and mental ability, no matter where they
2 live. Since 1990, the total Hispanic population in the state has almost doubled, and Rhode Island
3 is the home to the highest number of immigrants per capita in the country. Many new immigrants
4 rely on libraries as their introduction to this country and use the library to learn English and
5 obtain information about jobs and education. The percentage of population 65 and over in Rhode
6 Island is 15%, compared to the national average of 12%. Seniors rely on libraries for social
7 interaction, health information, and because many are on fixed incomes, for free information and
8 programs. According to the 2000 Census, 40,117 children in Rhode Island live below the poverty
9 line, a number that rose 30% since the 1990 Census. Libraries introduce children to literacy skills
10 and give them a head start on their education; and

11 WHEREAS, Libraries are a economic development tool. Studies show that people
12 change jobs an average of six times over their working lives, and libraries assist users in making
13 career choices; and

14 WHEREAS, Strong library systems support a successful educational system, which leads
15 to a better educated workforce, and contributes to a good quality of life in the state, factors
16 companies examine when deciding where to locate a business; and

17 WHEREAS, Libraries have a unique opportunity to address the challenges people face in
18 our contemporary society. Libraries have the ability to help all people access, use and understand
19 information technologies, information and the Internet. Effective library programs bridge the
20 digital divide between those who have access to technology and those who do not; and

21 WHEREAS, Advances in technology will make it possible to foster greater cooperation
22 among different types of libraries, leading to a seamless interface of networked information such
23 that residents can easily access this information from wherever they are located. Cooperation
24 allows individual libraries to serve their users more effectively by offering them access to the
25 resources available to residents; and

26 WHEREAS, A comprehensive study of library services that will help in Rhode Island
27 will yield recommendations for leveraging resources that will help all libraries respond to the
28 state's changing demographics, emerging technologies, and evolving educational, informational,
29 recreational, and cultural needs of the community; now, therefore be it

30 RESOLVED, That this General Assembly of the State of Rhode Island and Providence
31 Plantations hereby creates a special legislative commission to study the current strengths and
32 weaknesses of library services in Rhode Island and develop a proposal to improve the future
33 services by libraries of all types for the people of Rhode Island; and be it further

34 RESOLVED, That a special legislative commission be and the same is hereby created

1 consisting of twenty (20) members; three (3) of whom shall be members of the House of
2 Representatives, not more than two (2) from the same political party, to be appointed by the
3 Speaker of the House; three (3) of whom shall be members of the Senate, not more than two (2)
4 from the same political party, to be appointed by the President of the Senate; two (2) of whom
5 shall be members of the general public, to be appointed by the Governor; one (1) of whom shall
6 be a representative from a large public library, to be appointed by the LibFutures Steering
7 Committee; one (1) of whom shall be a representative from a medium-size public library, to be
8 appointed by the LibFutures Steering Committee; one (1) of whom shall be a representative from
9 a small public library, to be appointed by the LibFutures Steering Committee; one (1) of whom
10 shall be a representative from an academic library at a public institution of higher education, to be
11 appointed by the LibFutures Steering Committee; one (1) of whom shall be a representative from
12 an academic library at a private institution of higher education, to be appointed by the LibFutures
13 Steering Committee; one (1) of whom shall be a representative from a hospital library, to be
14 appointed by the LibFutures Steering Committee; one (1) of whom shall be a representative from
15 a special library, to be appointed by the LibFutures Steering Committee; one (1) of whom shall be
16 a representative from a government or institutional library, to be appointed by the LibFutures
17 Steering Committee; one (1) of whom shall be a representative from an elementary school library,
18 to be appointed by the LibFutures Steering Committee; one (1) of whom shall be a representative
19 from a secondary school library, to be appointed by the LibFutures Steering Committee; one (1)
20 of whom shall be a representative from the University of Rhode Island's Graduate School of
21 Library and Information Services (URI/GSLIS), to be appointed by the LibFutures Steering
22 Committee; and one (1) of whom shall be a representative of Library Services from the Office of
23 Library & Information Services (OLIS), to be appointed by the LibFutures Steering Committee.

24 The purpose of said commission shall be to make a comprehensive study to of the current
25 strengths and weaknesses of library services in Rhode Island and develop a proposal, including,
26 but not limited to, legislation, that will address improvements in the future services provided by
27 all types of libraries, for the betterment and benefit of people of the state of Rhode Island.

28 Forthwith upon passage of this resolution, the members of said commission shall meet at
29 the call of the Speaker of the House and organize and shall select, from among the legislators, a
30 chairperson. Vacancies in said commission shall be filled in like manner as the original
31 appointment.

32 The membership of said commission shall receive no compensation for their services.

33 All departments and agencies of the state shall furnish such advice and information,
34 documentary and otherwise, to said commission and its agents as is deemed necessary or

1 desirable by the commission to facilitate the purposes of this resolution, including full subpoena
2 power, which may only be exercised with the prior approval of the Speaker of the House of
3 Representatives and President of the Senate.

4 The Speaker of the House is hereby authorized and directed to provide suitable quarters
5 for said commission; and be it further

6 RESOLVED, That the commission shall report its findings and recommendations to the
7 General Assembly no later than February 3, 2005 and said commission shall expire on April 3,
8 2005.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
JOINT RESOLUTION
CREATING A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO STUDY THE CURRENT
STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF LIBRARY SERVICES IN THE STATE OF RHODE
ISLAND

1 This resolution would create a twenty (20) member special legislative commission whose
2 purpose it would be to make a comprehensive study of the current strengths and weaknesses of
3 library services in Rhode Island and develop a proposal, including, but not limited to, legislation,
4 that will address improvements in the future services provided by all types of libraries and who
5 would report back to the general assembly no later than February 3, 2005 and whose life would
6 expire on April 3, 2005.

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