

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND**

**IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2006**

**J O I N T   R E S O L U T I O N**

**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, Lewiss, San Bento, and Rose

Date Introduced: February 08, 2006

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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 an 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  
19 understand information technologies, information and the Internet. Effective library programs  
20 bridge the 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-one (21) 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 LibFutures Steering Committee;  
6 one (1) of whom shall be a representative from a large public library, to be appointed by the  
7 LibFutures Steering Committee; one (1) of whom shall be a representative from a medium-size  
8 public library, to be appointed by the LibFutures Steering Committee; one (1) of whom shall be a  
9 representative from a small public library, to be appointed by the LibFutures Steering Committee;  
10 one (1) of whom shall be a representative from an academic library at a public institution of  
11 higher learning, to be appointed by the LibFutures Steering Committee; one (1) of whom shall be  
12 a representative from an academic library at a private institution of higher education, to be  
13 appointed by the LibFutures Steering Committee; one (1) of whom shall be a representative from  
14 a hospital library, to be appointed by the LibFutures Steering Committee; one (1) of whom shall  
15 be a representative from a special library, to be appointed by the LibFutures Steering Committee;  
16 one (1) of whom shall be a representative from a government or institutional library, to be  
17 appointed by the LibFutures Steering Committee; one (1) of whom shall be a representative from  
18 an elementary school library, to be appointed by the LibFutures Steering Committee; one (1) of  
19 whom shall be a representative from a secondary school library, to be appointed by the  
20 LibFutures Steering Committee; one (1) of whom shall be a representative from the University of  
21 Rhode Island's Graduate School of Library and Information Services (URI/GSLIS), to be  
22 appointed by the LibFutures Steering Committee; one (1) of whom shall be a representative of  
23 Library Services from the Office of Library & Information Services (OLIS), to be appointed by  
24 the LibFutures Steering Committee and one (1) of whom shall be a representative from the state  
25 law library.

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

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

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

1 All departments and agencies of the state shall furnish such advice and information,  
2 documentary and otherwise, to said commission and its agents as is deemed necessary or  
3 desirable by the commission to facilitate the purposes of this resolution, including full subpoena  
4 power, which may only be exercised with the prior approval of the Speaker of the House of  
5 Representatives and President of the Senate.

6 The Joint Committee on Legislative Services is hereby authorized and directed to provide  
7 suitable quarters for said commission; and be it further

8 RESOLVED, That the commission shall report its findings and recommendations to the  
9 General Assembly no later than February 1, 2007 and said commission shall expire on April 1,  
10 2007.

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LC01450/SUB A  
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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

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1           This resolution would create a twenty-one (21) member special legislative commission  
2 whose purpose it would be to make a comprehensive study of the current strengths and  
3 weaknesses of library services in Rhode Island and develop a proposal, including, but not limited  
4 to, legislation, that will address improvements in the future services provided by all types of  
5 libraries and who would report back to the general assembly no later than February 1, 2007 and  
6 whose life would expire on April 1, 2007.

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