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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2013

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A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- DEPARTMENT OF  
ADMINISTRATION

Introduced By: Representative Arthur Handy

Date Introduced: June 26, 2013

Referred To: House Environment and Natural Resources

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1           SECTION 1. Section 23-84-3 of the General Laws in Chapter 23-84 entitled "The Rhode  
2   Island Climate Risk Reduction Act of 2010" is hereby amended to read as follows:  
3           **23-84-3. Creation of The Rhode Island Climate Change Commission.** -- (a) There is  
4   hereby created ~~an independent~~ a commission known as "The Rhode Island Climate Change  
5   Commission" consisting of ~~twenty-eight (28)~~ twenty-nine (29) members as follows: three (3) of  
6   whom shall be members of the senate, to be appointed by the senate president, not more than two  
7   (2) from the same political party; three (3) of whom shall be members of the house of  
8   representatives, to be appointed by the speaker of the house not more than two (2) from the same  
9   political party; one of whom shall be the director of the department of environmental  
10   management, or his or her designee; one of whom shall be the executive director of the coastal  
11   resources management council, or his or her designee; one of whom shall be the director of the  
12   department of transportation, or his or her designee; one of whom shall be the chair of the Rhode  
13   Island bays, rivers, and watersheds coordination team; one of whom shall be the director of the  
14   Rhode Island department of health, or his or her designee; one of whom shall be the chief of staff  
15   of the water resources board, or his or her designee; one of whom shall be the director of the  
16   division of planning, or his or her designee; one of whom shall be the state building  
17   commissioner, or his or her designee; one of whom shall be the director of the Rhode Island  
18   emergency management agency, or his or her designee; two (2) of whom shall represent

1 municipal governments of coastal municipalities one appointed by the senate president and one  
2 appointed by the speaker of the house; two (2) of whom shall be representatives of environmental  
3 non-profit organizations, appointed by the environment council of Rhode Island; two (2) of whom  
4 shall be representatives of business, one designated by the greater Providence chamber of  
5 commerce and one designated by the Rhode Island chamber of commerce coalition; two (2) of  
6 whom shall be representatives of higher education institutions, one appointed by the board of  
7 governors for higher education and one appointed by the association of independent colleges and  
8 universities of Rhode Island; one of whom shall be a representative of a utility distribution  
9 company having greater than one hundred thousand (100,000) customers to be appointed by the  
10 senate president; one of whom shall be the executive director of the Rhode Island realtors  
11 association, or his or her designee; one of whom shall be the executive director of the Rhode  
12 Island builders association, or his or her designee; one of whom shall be the executive director of  
13 the American institute of architects of Rhode Island, or his or her designee; ~~and~~ one of whom  
14 shall represent the medical profession, including, but not limited to, a doctor or nurse, to be  
15 appointed by the speaker of the house; and one of whom shall be the director of the department of  
16 administration, or his or her designee, who shall serve as the chair.

17 (b) The purposes of the commission shall be to study the projected impacts of climate  
18 change on Rhode Island, to identify and report methods of adapting to these climate change  
19 impacts in order to reduce likely harm and increase economic and ecosystem sustainability, and  
20 to identify potential mechanisms to mainstream climate adaptation into existing state and  
21 municipal programs including, but not limited to, policies plans, infrastructure development and  
22 maintenance.

23 (c) The commission shall support its purposes by undertaking the following duties  
24 including but not limited to:

25 (1) Recommending how to mainstream climate change, using a climate "lens", into  
26 existing state and local programs, policies and standards, and identify potential options to  
27 incorporate adaptation strategies.

28 (2) Compiling existing studies, research and programs relevant to climate change trends  
29 and potential impacts in Rhode Island and identifying gaps in the research available.

30 (3) Conducting a comprehensive overview of the risks Rhode Island may face as a result  
31 of rising air and water temperatures and sea level, increased storminess, and more intense  
32 droughts and rainfall events.

33 (4) Investigating the vulnerability of critical roads, bridges, protection infrastructure such  
34 as hurricane barriers, dams, and revetments, and public facilities such as hospitals, schools,

1 sewage treatment plants, parks and beaches and other critical utilities to sea level rise, increased  
2 flooding and extended extreme summer heat.

3 (5) Exploring potential changes to floodplains and ways to notify homeowners, renters  
4 and commercial property owners of not only a property's flooding history but also its expected  
5 risk under projected levels of climate change and sea level rise.

6 (6) Assessing ecosystem impacts such as salt marshes, forests, and urban tree canopy and  
7 researching tree and plant species that will be most resilient to climate change expected in Rhode  
8 Island, as well as ways to secure additional funding to support the expansion of urban tree canopy  
9 to thirty percent (30%).

10 (7) Identifying potential ecosystem based adaptation options where conservation or  
11 restoration of natural ecosystems can provide key ecosystems services by minimizing risks and  
12 hazards from flooding and drought cycles.

13 (8) Identifying ways to increase Rhode Islanders' access to critical community health  
14 services that are expected to become more important as a result of projected climate impacts.

15 (9) Investigating potential impacts from non-point source pollution due to hydrological  
16 changes including stormwater runoff options for the Phase 2 Narragansett Bay Commission's  
17 Combined Sewer Overflow project, and implementing small-scale projects such as increasing the  
18 percentage of pervious surfaces in residential areas such as yards and gardens.

19 (10) Exploring possibilities to make funds or low interest loans available for  
20 governmental entities, non-profit entities and businesses to implement adaptation strategies,  
21 including green infrastructure projects on their properties, including green roofs, walls, and  
22 bioretention areas.

23 (11) Investigating possibilities to expand energy efficiency and weatherization programs  
24 as an adaptation option.

25 (12) Reviewing, among other things, existing local ordinances, provisions adopted by  
26 associations, deed restrictions, covenants, declarations or similar binding agreements, which  
27 prohibit or have the effect of prohibiting the installation of solar collectors, clotheslines,  
28 weatherization improvements, gardens or other energy devices based on renewable resources and  
29 proposing alternatives that would eliminate said prohibitions and authorize these types of uses as  
30 climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies for local implementation.

31 (13) Reviewing possibilities to amend regulations to allow street parking to reduce  
32 impervious surfaces in urban areas and runoff.

33 (14) Investigating how to support local agriculture including urban community gardens,  
34 and encouraging municipalities to foster neighborhood gardens in empty lots and parks.

1           (15) Developing a plan to expand access to cooling and relief centers by extending hours  
2 at libraries, community centers and opening pools to the public.

3           (16) Identifying examples and options for outreach and communication on climate  
4 change and adaptation options and recommending opportunities for coordinated outreach  
5 programs within Rhode Island.

6           (d) ~~One senator and one representative appointed to the commission shall serve as co-~~  
7 ~~chairs and shall call the first meeting of the commission.~~ Vacancies shall be filled in like manner  
8 as the original appointment. The membership of the commission shall receive no compensation  
9 for their services. All departments and agencies of the state shall furnish such advice and  
10 information, documentary and otherwise, to the commission and its agents as is deemed  
11 necessary or desirable by the commission to facilitate the purposes of this chapter. The joint  
12 committee on legislative services is hereby authorized and directed to provide suitable quarters  
13 for the commission.

14           (e) The commission shall provide a report of its findings and recommendations to the  
15 governor and the general assembly no later than March 1, 2011, and every March 1 thereafter.

16           SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- DEPARTMENT OF  
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- 1           This act would amend the qualifications of the number of members on the climate change
- 2 advisory committee.
- 3           This act would take effect upon passage.

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