

January 2025

Newsletter



EVENTS FOR FEBRUARY:

Feb 11th-Show
Some Love
Event

Feb 22- Town
Hall Event
with Speaker
Shekarchi

A New Year Message

Happy New Year! As we begin 2025, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for your trust and support. Together, we've achieved so much—securing vital resources for our schools, protecting our forests and shorelines, expanding access to healthcare, and creating stronger, more connected communities.

None of this progress would have been possible without your voices, ideas, and dedication. You inspire me every day to keep working hard and delivering results that make a real difference for our district.

As we look ahead, I'm excited to build on our successes and address the challenges that remain. Whether it's through legislation, community initiatives, or partnerships, I'm committed to making our home an even better place for everyone.

Thank you for your continued support and for being such an important part of our journey. Let's make 2025 another year of progress and shared success!

Richmond Council Meeting

By Cynthia Drummond for BRVCA

RICHMOND – Town Council members addressed a number of housekeeping issues at their Jan. 21 meeting, agreeing they would need more information before voting on them. Members also heard from state Rep. Megan Cotter, D-Richmond, Exeter, Hopkinton, who had been invited to attend the meeting to present her legislative priorities.

First on Cotter's list is the creation of the Inspector General.

"We built a very balanced budget and I'm very proud of the budget that we built, but once the money is released, we have no idea of how well it's being spent, so I think it is really important that we have someone on oversight, watching where those dollars go," she told the council.

Other legislation includes a bill known as "Kids' Code, to protect children when they are online.

Another priority is a guarantee of regional transportation in the Chariho School District.

"I like to compare us and Central Falls," she said. "Central Falls is one square mile, whereas Chariho is 120 square miles. Our kids don't have the luxury of walking to school, and this is not a guaranteed payout from the state every year, so potentially, our school districts have to build a budget and hope for the best."

Cotter also supports a 6% bonus for regional school districts, school policies for students' behavioral health issues, increasing the tax credit for disabled and senior residents from \$35,000 to \$50,000 and increase the tax rebate from \$500 to \$850.00.

Another goal is a tax credit for forestry workers.

"The average age in that industry is probably 65," Cotter said. "We need some young folks to get in there and start working in there, that live in Rhode Island. We have a lot of outsource work."

Cotter is also working on the formation of a commission to study utility costs.

"What we can do, as a body, to reduce energy costs – not just capping profits," she said.

Join Us for the 3rd Annual Show Some Love Event! 🧡

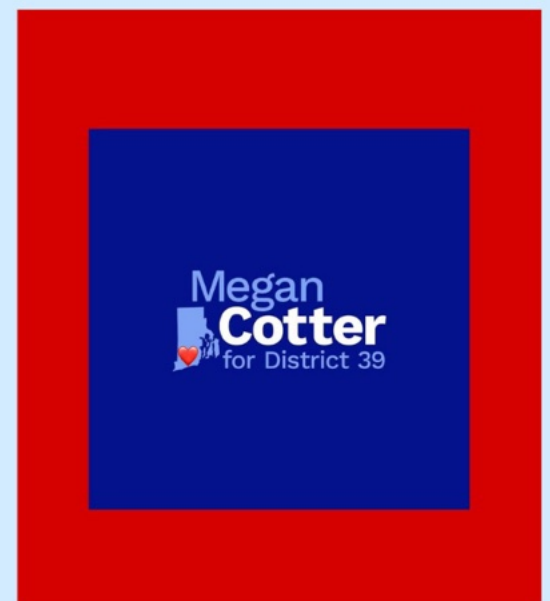
Mark your calendars! On February 11th at 6 PM, we're gathering at Tilted Barn for an evening of community, kindness, and connection at the 3rd Annual Show Some Love event.

Here's how it works:

- 🧡 Bring a personal care item to donate.
- 🧡 Enjoy a free dinner—my treat!

All donations will benefit RICAN and The Exeter Department of Social Services, helping our most vulnerable neighbors.

This event is truly one of my favorites, and I'm so excited to share it with you again this year. Let's come together to make a difference and show the power of love in our community. I hope to see you there!



Rate hikes are forcing impossible choices for RI families

Megan's recent opinion letter published in the Providence Journal

Rhode Islanders are being pushed to the breaking point by sky-high utility rates. We faced a 47% electric rate hike in October 2022. With electricity costing an average of 27.57 cents per kilowatt-hour— 61% higher than the national average —many families are paying over \$130 a month just to keep the lights on. For those living paycheck-to-paycheck, that's a devastating hit to their already-stretched budgets.

Meanwhile, the CEO of RI Energy received a 31% raise that year, taking home \$11.97 million.

These rates aren't just a financial inconvenience; they're forcing impossible choices. Seniors on fixed incomes, parents with young children, and low-income families often have to sacrifice food, rent or medicine just to pay their utility bills. No one should have to choose between basic needs and staying warm in winter or cool in summer.

Part of the problem is that Rhode Island's utility companies, like Rhode Island Energy, operate as distribution monopolies. With no competition, they have little incentive to keep rates fair or service reliable. President Theodore Roosevelt warned us about monopolies over a century ago, saying, "The absence of effective state, and, especially, national, restraint upon unfair money-getting has tended to create a small class of enormously wealthy and economically powerful men, whose chief object is to hold and increase their power." It's the government's job to step in and protect people from these practices — and that's exactly what we need to do.

That's why I'm proposing a cap on gas and electric utility profit margins at 4%. This cap will ensure that utility companies focus on providing fair, efficient and reliable service instead of inflating profits for shareholders.

Writing the profit cap into state law, as opposed to allowing it to be fluid and determined by the Public Utilities Commission, would make the limit stable and nonnegotiable, thereby better protecting Rhode Islanders.

It will also help stabilize utility costs for hardworking Rhode Islanders who are struggling under the weight of rising expenses.

By capping profits, we'll not only give relief to families but also bring much-needed transparency to the system. Utility companies will need to be clear about where your money goes and invest in infrastructure and renewable energy projects that benefit everyone without clear-cutting our forests.

It's time to put Rhode Islanders first. No one should have to choose between keeping the lights on and putting food on the table. I urge my fellow legislators to support this measure and work toward long-term solutions to make utilities more affordable for everyone.

Why This Town Hall is Important

Town halls are a vital way to maintain open communication between elected leaders and the people they serve. This discussion with Rhode Island's Speaker of the House is a unique opportunity to connect directly with one of the state's top decision-makers, right here in District 39. We're incredibly fortunate to have the Speaker join us in our community to discuss the issues that matter most to us.

Right now, Rhode Island faces critical challenges, including two hospitals navigating bankruptcy and undergoing attempts to short-sell their facilities. These developments raise serious concerns about access to healthcare and the long-term stability of our healthcare system. Paired with important discussions around the state budget, these issues have far-reaching impacts on our schools, infrastructure, public safety, and the overall well-being of our residents.

This town hall is your chance to hear firsthand about efforts to address these challenges, ask questions, and share your thoughts. Your input is essential in crafting solutions that reflect the needs and priorities of our community.

Send me an email to reserve your seat. Don't miss this rare opportunity to engage with the Speaker of the House and help shape a brighter future for District 39 and all Rhode Islanders. Sign up today and join us for this important conversation!



TOWN HALL MEETING

SATURDAY, 22 FEBRUARY @ 10AM
CLARK MEMORIAL LIBRARY

Join State Representative Megan Cotter and the Richmond Democrats for a town hall featuring Rhode Island Speaker of the House, where they'll discuss the state budget and the future of healthcare in Rhode Island.

Speaker Shekarchi

Megan Cotter

[REGISTER NOW](#)



Important Volunteer Opportunity

What: The Show Some Love Event

When: Feb 11th at Tilted Barn

We need help sorting donations.

Email me if you can help!