

2025 -- H 5847 SUBSTITUTE A

LC001820/SUB A

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

HOUSE RESOLUTION

CREATING A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO STUDY AND PROVIDE FINDINGS AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS THE FLOODING OF THE PAWTUXET RIVER

Introduced By: Representatives Read, Noret, Nardone, Quattrocchi, Baginski, Serpa, Roberts, Bennett, Chippendale, and Santucci
Date Introduced: February 28, 2025

Referred To: House Environment and Natural Resources

1 WHEREAS, The Pawtuxet River watershed is the largest of Rhode Island's watersheds
2 within the State's boundaries. With its headwaters in the hills of western Rhode Island, the river's
3 North Branch flows generally west to east for 17 miles from the Gainer Dam in Scituate, and
4 enters Narragansett Bay at Pawtuxet Cove; and

5 WHEREAS, Pre-existing elevated river levels, river structures, and saturated soil
6 conditions have resulted in serious and potentially life-threatening flood situations along the
7 Pawtuxet River; and

8 WHEREAS, On numerous occasions, the Pawtuxet River flooding has caused fowl-
9 smelling river sediment to be washed downstream and deposited on abutting homes and
10 businesses; and

11 WHEREAS, In December of 2023, heavy rain led to historic water levels almost 6 feet
12 over flood stage, resulting in flooding of Warwick neighborhoods by the Pawtuxet River; and

13 WHEREAS, In January of 2024, the river once again inundated neighborhoods in
14 Warwick and surrounding areas with the rising water levels and resultant damages; and

15 WHEREAS, In the best interest of the general public and future generations, it is
16 essential to find solutions to this ongoing and potentially hazardous issue; now therefore be it

17 RESOLVED, That a special legislative commission be and the same is hereby created
18 consisting of eleven (11) members: three (3) of whom shall be members of the House of
19 Representatives from areas affected by Pawtuxet River flooding, to be appointed by the Speaker

1 of the House; one of whom shall be the District Engineer Commander of the New England
2 District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, or designee; one of whom shall be a home owner in a
3 potential flood zone area, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House; one of whom shall be a
4 business owner in a potential flood zone area, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House; one
5 of whom shall be the Director of the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA), or
6 designee; one of whom shall be the Acting Regional Administrator for FEMA Region 1, or
7 designee; one of whom shall be the Director of the Warwick Sewer Authority, or designee; one of
8 whom shall be the Director of the RI Department of Environmental Management, or designee;
9 and one of whom shall be the Chairman of the Pawtuxet River Authority and Watershed
10 Authority, or designee.

11 In lieu of any appointment of a member of the legislature to a permanent advisory
12 commission, a legislative study commission, or any commission created by a General Assembly
13 resolution, the appointing authority may appoint a member of the general public to serve in lieu
14 of a legislator.

15 The purpose of said commission shall be to study and provide findings and potential
16 solutions to address the flooding of the Pawtuxet River including, but not limited to:

- 17 1. Infrastructure improvements like dredging the riverbed;
- 18 2. Constructing floodwalls or levees;
- 19 3. Enhancing storm drains;
- 20 4. Implementing green infrastructure like rain gardens;
- 21 5. Revising land use planning to limit development in floodplains; and
- 22 6. Community preparedness initiatives to minimize flood impacts and promote resilience.

23 Forthwith upon passage of this resolution, the members of the commission shall meet at
24 the call of the Speaker of the House and organize and shall select, from among the legislators, a
25 chairperson.

26 Vacancies in said commission shall be filled in like manner as the original appointment.

27 The membership of said commission shall receive no compensation for their services. All
28 departments and agencies of the state shall furnish such advice and information, documentary and
29 otherwise, to said commission and its agents as is deemed necessary or desirable by the
30 commission to facilitate the purposes of this resolution.

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

- 1 RESOLVED, That the commission shall report its findings to the House of
- 2 Representatives no later than March 2, 2026, and said commission shall expire on June 2, 2026.

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