



## **For Immediate Release**

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## **State Senator Proposes Environmental Rights Protection for Rhode Island**

***Providence, Rhode Island***; State Senator V. Susan Sosnowski has submitted a proposal to amend the Rhode Island state constitution's Declaration of Rights and Principles (S0327) so it will now recognize and protect the rights of all the people in the state a clean and healthy environment, a safe climate, and to the preservation of the state's natural resources for present and future generations. If passed, the amendment would place environmental rights in the state legally on par with other well-recognized fundamental rights such as the rights to free speech and to peaceably assemble, private property rights and freedom of religion.

The amendment would be added to Article 1 of the the state constitution, and would read:

*All people in the state of Rhode Island (The Ocean State) have an inherent, inalienable, indefeasible, and self-executing right to clean air, clean water, healthy and uncontaminated soil, a life-supporting climate, and the preservation of the environment's natural, scenic, and recreational values. The state shall serve as trustee of the natural resources of Rhode Island, and shall conserve, protect, and maintain these resources for the benefit of all the people, including both present and future generations. The state shall not infringe upon these rights, and shall protect these rights and Rhode Island's natural resources equitably for all people regardless of race, ethnicity, gender or socioeconomics.*

“With this proposal, Rhode Island is on the leading edge of the national Green Amendments movement where states are stepping in to the fray to ensure full and fair protection for the environments that are essential to every aspect of life. Currently 3 states give this highest protection to environmental rights. With this proposal, Rhode Island becomes the 16<sup>th</sup> state to file-refile a

Green Amendment proposal this year and joins with over 20 other states where communities are actively engaged in seeking Green Amendment protections,” said **Maya van Rossum, Founder of the national Green Amendment movement and organization, [Green Amendments for the Generations](#) and author of [The Green Amendment, the People’s Fight For a Clean, Safe & Healthy Environment](#).**

The Rhode Island Green Amendment movement began as the result of in-state interest. The **Green Team at Peace Dale Congregational Church in Wakefield, RI, co-chaired by Don Hermes and George Faucher**, met with State Senator Susan Sosnowski early on in 2024 to discuss having Rhode Island join the nationally expanding Green Amendment movement. Senator Susan Sosnowski enthusiastically embraced the initiative from the start, offering her full support and commitment to its success. **Don Hermes commented**, “This is a big move by a small state! We are proud to continue our role as a leader to ensure the protection of the environment for all future generations to come.”

**According to van Rossum**, “protecting the environmental rights of the people of Rhode Island is an important compliment to the current right of the people to enjoy and freely exercise their rights to the state’s fishery and shores already found in the state constitution at Article 1, sections 16 and 17. But rather than instruct government officials in the state to regulate and control the use of the state’s natural resources as a means of advancing natural resource protection, the proposed Rhode Island Green Amendment will create a right of the people to a clean, safe and healthy environment and ensures the people of the state can secure the protections they need when existing laws fail to do so.”

Constitutional Green Amendments already exist in Pennsylvania, Montana, and most recently New York, where it is being used to encourage and secure stronger environmental protections. In addition to Rhode Island, constitutional environmental rights proposals that meet the definition of a Green Amendment include: Connecticut, New Jersey, New Mexico, Hawaii, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Nebraska, Oregon and Texas [along with nearly half a dozen others](#) with more on the way.

If passed by a majority of each of the state’s legislative houses, the amendment would then go on the ballot for Rhode Island voters. If passed by a majority of the state’s voters, the amendment would then be added to the state constitution.

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