

Governor Gina M. Raimondo

State of the State Address

Rhode Island State House
January 17, 2017

As Prepared for Delivery

Introduction

Good evening.

Speaker Mattiello, Senate President Paiva Weed, and Members of the General Assembly; Our distinguished guests: our mayors and municipal leaders, our judiciary, our college presidents, members of my Cabinet: We come together this evening to continue a longstanding tradition. A tradition that puts a spotlight on the incredible and remarkable responsibility that we have as stewards of our state.¹

To our state employees: Thank you for all that you do every single day to serve Rhode Island.

To my family, Andy, Ceci, Tommy and my mother: Thank you for the love and support you give me every day which enables me to answer my own call to public service.

And, of course, to my fellow Rhode Islanders: Thank you for the humbling opportunity and trust you have given to me to work on your behalf.

Strong and Getting Stronger

At the end of last summer, I got an email from Cindy Strain, a mom from Lincoln.

She told me the economy has changed and she was worried her kids would have a tougher time than she did. I worry about the same thing for my own children. But she wanted for her kids what every parent wants: Opportunity.

Her son Christopher enrolled in CCRI after graduating from Lincoln High. He worked hard. But college just wasn't for him. After leaving CCRI, Christopher enrolled in, and completed, one of our manufacturing training programs.² He completed the program and today, he's employed as a full time machinist with Greystone Manufacturing, a local company that added jobs last year because of our new economic development initiatives.³

Cindy and Christopher are here tonight and are a reminder of the progress we've made⁴ and the promises we must keep.

¹ On January 6, 2015, Governor Raimondo took the oath of office, which [states](#): "I, Gina Raimondo, by the free vote of the electors of this state of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, elected unto the place of do solemnly swear to be true and faithful unto this state, and to support the Constitution of this state and of the United States; that you will faithfully and impartially discharge all the duties of your aforesaid office to the best of your abilities, according to law: So help [me] God."

² The Shipbuilding and Marine Trades and Advanced Manufacturing Institute provides unemployed Rhode Islanders with the free training and skills development to enter the workforce as ship builders, pipe fitters, machinists and welders. SAMI has always been supported in part by the Governor's Workforce Board and since Governor Raimondo has taken office, it has been a training and educational partner for several of the state's Real Jobs RI partnerships, including the state's partnership with Electric Boat. In October, Governor Raimondo [attended the celebration marking the 150th SAMI graduate who was hired upon completing the program](#).

³ [Valley Breeze \(Jan. 6, 2016\)](#): "Greystone is a manufacturer of high volume, precision computer numerical control tuned parts, with an 83-year Rhode Island legacy. The business currently employs 226 people in Lincoln, and leaders are proposing hiring 25 new, full-time employees with a median annual salary of \$52,000. It will also expand one of its facilities by approximately 10,000 square feet to accommodate new machinery and staff."

⁴ According to the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, Rhode Island added 9,900 jobs from January 2015 through November 2016, the most recent month for which data are available..

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As leaders in this state we have to protect the progress that we've made, and keep our promise to Rhode Islanders who ask for nothing more than an opportunity to work hard. To quote Cindy's email, we owe every Rhode Islander "a shot at a good job, a full-time job, a job with benefits, a job that has room for advancements, and a job people can make a career out of."

My fellow Rhode Islanders, because of hardworking, gritty, determined, and talented Rhode Islanders; Because of companies that are expanding here; Because we have come together as one state to invest in ourselves, I stand here this evening with optimism, confidence and pride and say that **the state of our state is getting stronger every day.**

Our economy is stronger.

We've cut our unemployment rate by more than half since it reached a peak of over 11 percent in 2009.⁵ Employers across our state – many of them small, locally owned businesses – have created thousands of jobs since I stood before you at this time last year.⁶ After years of marching uphill toward recovery, we have finally regained all the private sector jobs that were lost in the recession.⁷

Our business climate is stronger.

Last year, we cut our unemployment insurance tax for the first time since 1992, saving employers \$30 million.⁸ We eliminated the sales tax on energy⁹ and reduced the corporate minimum tax.¹⁰ And it's all paying off.

For more than half a decade, the 195 land in Providence has been nothing more than dirt, a symbol of our economic challenges. But as we begin a new year¹¹ – our third working together – shovels, construction and thousands of jobs¹² are at long last on their way downtown.¹³

Because of the hard choices we've made together and the strategic investments we've protected, businesses are finally taking a fresh look at Rhode Island.¹⁴ The budget I'll send you this week protects our Commerce programs for one simple reason: Because they're working.¹⁵

⁵ <http://www.dlt.ri.gov/lmi/laus/state/histadj.htm>

⁶ According to BLS's labor market index (LMI) data, small businesses (companies that employ fewer than 100 people) added 3,998 jobs between Q1 2015 and Q1 2016. BLS releases business size class data annually at the end of the first quarter.

⁷ [Providence Journal \(Nov. 17, 2017\)](#): "October was the first month Rhode Island's private-sector jobs numbered higher than during the state's employment peak of December 2006, a point Governor Raimondo praised Thursday as a 'very positive milestone.'"

⁸ [Governor's Press Release \(Jan. 9, 2017\)](#): Unemployment Taxes Cut for First Time in 25 Years

⁹ [Providence Journal \(Oct. 15, 2015\)](#): Sales tax cuts for commercial energy use showing dividends

¹⁰ When Governor Raimondo took office, the corporate minimum tax was \$500. In 2015, she signed a budget which cut the rate to \$450. The FY17 budget cut the corporate minimum tax another \$50 to \$400.

¹¹ [Providence Journal \(Dec. 12, 2016\)](#): Wexford tech complex has secured 2 tenants

¹² An independent analysis conducted for the R.I. Commerce Corporation estimates the Wexford complex and hotel will directly employ approximately 871 employees once the project is fully operational. Additionally, the firm expects more than 450 indirect jobs would be created at businesses such as dry cleaners, restaurants and with vendors doing business with the firms in the complex. The New York City-based firm Applesseed, which Commerce has retained to conduct financial analyses of projects the state invests in, further estimates that 800 construction jobs will be needed to build the facility, and 250 other jobs connected to that influx of workers would be created indirectly. Applesseed estimates the project will generate \$5 million in taxes annually to the state, or \$100 million over 20 years, including personal income, sales and corporate income taxes. Plus the analysis shows the value the project could add to the state's gross domestic product could be more than \$100 million each year.

¹³ [Providence Journal Editorial \(Dec. 17, 2016\)](#): A Game Changer for Rhode Island

¹⁴ The Commerce Corporation has approved 11 agreements with companies that are adding jobs in Rhode Island through the Qualified Jobs initiative, including: AT Cross, Virgin Pulse, Greystone, Ocean State Jobs Lot, Trade Area Systems, Ivory Ella, GE Digital, Lexington Lighting, Granite Telecommunications and Surplus Solutions. In addition, the state has a signed letter of intent with Johnson & Johnson and their application will be taken before the Commerce board early this year.

¹⁵ The economic tools Governor Raimondo created with support from the General Assembly are already projected to create 873 permanent jobs through the Qualified Jobs Incentive Act. Additionally, the state has invested, through the Rebuild Rhode Island program, \$50 million which leverages \$500 million in private development.

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For the first time in a very long time, world-class companies like GE¹⁶ and Johnson & Johnson¹⁷ are choosing Rhode Island as the place they want to be,¹⁸ the place they want to grow. Other local businesses like AT Cross,^{19/20} Virgin Pulse²¹ and Electric Boat²² have made the decision to add jobs here. I love the work I do convincing companies to come here because I believe in Rhode Island and I believe in the people of Rhode Island. These companies are lucky to be able to hire our talented people.

Our workforce is getting stronger.

Thousands of Rhode Islanders are learning new skills to compete in our growing advanced economy. I met a man, probably in his late 40s, last year in Westerly, at one of our training programs. He pulled me aside and he said, “Governor thank you for believing you can teach an old dog new tricks.” I do believe that. And I’m proud of the Rhode Islanders with the courage and determination to learn new skills in the middle of their careers.

The budget I’ll send to the legislature protects and expands our investment in training programs so that every Rhode Islander can compete.

Our infrastructure is stronger.

Last year, we passed the most comprehensive infrastructure program in recent history. It’s no secret that our roads and bridges are some of the worst²³ in the country. But now, because of RhodeWorks,²⁴ we’re fixing our highways. By the end of this year, we’ll have started or completed repairs on nearly 120 bridges: a visible sign that we are rebuilding Rhode Island²⁵ together. And in the process, we’re putting thousands of Rhode Islanders to work in good jobs that don’t require a college degree.²⁶

Our schools are getting stronger and our kids are getting a shot at a brighter future.

To set all of our students out on the right path, we’ve made important investments in their success. We came together two years ago to guarantee that every child is able to attend all-day kindergarten.²⁷ And we’ve made new investments to triple the number of public Pre-K classes.²⁸

¹⁶ [Boston Globe \(June 9, 2016\)](#): GE to bring 100 jobs to R.I.

¹⁷ [WPRI \(Dec. 19, 2016\)](#): Johnson & Johnson to hire 75 at new Rhode Island office

¹⁸ When Johnson & Johnson announced it was opening a health technology center in Rhode Island, and hiring at least 75 new employees, the company’s global vice president Steve Wrenn said, “Rhode Island has a strong network of educators, employers and decision makers that are advancing the integration of different health-related technologies... As a company with locations and options worldwide, we are very pleased with the opportunity the Ocean State provides.”

¹⁹ [Governor’s Press Release \(Dec. 21, 2016\)](#): “A.T. Cross has been a proud Rhode Island employer for 170 years, providing people all over the world with one of the most memorable gifts you can give. We are thrilled to have moved back to Providence and to be building our future there, with a new headquarters and a new Cross Store.” – A.T. Cross CEO Robert P. Baird, Jr.

²⁰ In 2016, Governor Raimondo announced A.T. Cross would stay and expand in Rhode Island. The company currently employs 105 people and plans to add 35 new jobs. A.T. Cross produces the official, ceremonial pens for The White House, as well as pens for Governor Raimondo’s official bill signings.

²¹ [Governor’s Press Release \(Dec. 15, 2016\)](#): “We considered a Boston office but ultimately chose Providence because of the access to talent and supportive business climate.” – David Osborne, President and COO of Virgin Pulse.

²² Governor Raimondo’s Real Jobs RI program helps companies train workers for positions they are creating. The program is supported with federal grant money thanks to support from Senator Jack Reed and Rhode Island’s Congressional Delegation. Electric Boat was one of the first companies to partner with the state in the new program and is using the DLT initiative to training many skilled workers for the thousands of the jobs they will create in Rhode Island over the next decade. Earlier this month, Governor Raimondo announced an additional \$3.6 million in Real Jobs RI funding to train workers so Electric Boat can complete its mission to the U.S. Navy.

²³ When he visited Rhode Island for an event touting investments in infrastructure, Vice President Joe Biden got a tour of the old East Shore Expressway Bridge in East Providence. After seeing the bridge, [he said](#), “For 10 years you’ve had Lincoln Logs holding the damn thing up! No, I mean go look at it! ... If everybody in Rhode Island watched the news tonight and saw that, they’d try to go around the damn bridge.” Less than six months later, because of RhodeWorks, a new bridge was built alongside the old structure and installed over the course of long weekend.

²⁴ <http://www.dot.ri.gov/news/rhodeworks.php>

²⁵ Other visual signs of progress are the literal progress signs that RIDOT has put up next to bridge repair projects across the state. The signs improve transparency and accountability.

²⁶ Source: Economic Impact of RhodeWorks: An Accelerated Transportation Restoration Plan by Regional Economic Models, Inc. (REMI). http://www.dot.ri.gov/documents/news/Economic_Impact_of_the_RhodeWorks_REMI_10_07_2015.pdf

²⁷ [Cranston Herald \(Sept. 21, 2016\)](#): Governor visits all-day K program at Woodridge Elementary

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By the end of this year, Rhode Island is going to be the first state in America to offer computer science²⁹ classes in every town and at every public school around the state.³⁰ Not California. Not Massachusetts or New York.

But Rhode Island.³¹ We're first.

Our commitment to our environment is stronger.

Last year, we made it easier for Rhode Island homeowners and businesses to be a part of our march toward a renewable future.³² Tonight, I'm announcing a goal to double the number of Rhode Islanders working in the green economy by 2020.^{33/34} After all, we are the Ocean State. Let's all continue to work together to protect the beauty of our state for future generations, and create jobs while we're at it.³⁵

And finally, our commitment to our Veterans and military families is stronger.

For years, we had a Veterans Affairs Division with no Veterans Affairs Director. Last year, I was proud to appoint Lt. Commander Kasim Yarn.³⁶ And he's gotten right to work. Under his leadership, we've opened a new Veterans Service Center in Warwick³⁷ and in less than a year, he's visited every single city and town, meeting vets in every community.³⁸ Thank you to every Rhode Islander who has worn the uniform, and thank you to the military families for your sacrifices and service to the nation.

Now, while we celebrate the success and the progress and the people who make us stronger, we still face challenges.

I share everyone's frustration, especially the frustration of those who depend on government assistance, over the roll out of our new social services computer program. I've taken measures to improve accountability. Rhode Island taxpayers will not pay a penny more for this system until I am satisfied that we are getting what we paid for.³⁹

And it is with the heaviest of hearts that I come before you again this year and say there is still no challenge more urgent than our overdose crisis – a crisis that is taking our friends and family from us in every single community all across Rhode Island. Thanks to the courageous and heartbreaking advocacy from Rhode Islanders affected by this crisis – Rhode Islanders like Deborah Parente who lost her son Peter; and Barbara and Brian Goldner, who lost their son Brandon –

²⁸ [Governor's Press Release \(May 16, 2016\)](#): "[Rhode Island has made progress] in increasing the quality of and access to early learning and to share strategies to accelerate this progress so that more young children can benefit from high quality early learning and development programs. We know that early childhood education and intervening early to address developmental delays is a cost-effective investment that will help to improve important education outcomes including third grade reading proficiency." – Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

²⁹ [EdTech Magazine \(May 8, 2016\)](#): "Part of turning our economy around and creating jobs is making sure every student, at every level, has access to the new basic skill: computer science," Governor Raimondo says on the initiative's site. "Thanks to the partners we have assembled for this initiative, I know we can achieve this goal."

³⁰ [WPRI \(Sept. 8, 2016\)](#): Rhode Island on track to meet computer science goal by next year.

³¹ [Providence Journal Video \(Sept. 28, 2016\)](#): Fred Humphries, the corporate vice president of U.S. government affairs for Microsoft, visited computer science students in Central Falls.

³² [H8354A, S2450B](#) – extends the Renewable Energy Fund, enhances the Renewable Energy Growth (REG) program, expands virtual net metering and offers third-party financing for homeowners and businesses

³³ 2020 goal: 20,000 green energy jobs; 2015 Baseline: 9,832 green energy jobs.

³⁴ Governor Raimondo has also set strategic goals to ensure that [75 percent of third graders are reading on grade level by 2025](#), that [70 percent of Rhode Island adults have an associate's degree or higher by 2025](#) and to [double the percent of state contracts awarded to minority-owned businesses and businesses owned by people with disabilities](#).

³⁵ When it [endorsed](#) Question 6 last fall, the Providence Journal editorial board touted that the Green Economy Bond would also have a big impact on the local economy. Outdoor recreation contributes \$2.4 billion to the state economy each year and supports 24,000 jobs.

³⁶ [WJAR \(Feb. 17, 2016\)](#): Governor Raimondo names new veteran affairs director

³⁷ [Latino Public Radio \(Sept. 14, 2016\)](#): Raimondo to open new veterans resource center

³⁸ Follow Director Yarn on Twitter ([@RIVetsDirector](#)). He keeps a constant journal of all his meetings across the state.

³⁹ <http://www.ri.gov/press/view/29375>

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we've increased funding for treatment and prevention,⁴⁰ funding that I ask the legislature to approve again this year. I'll also propose funding to support recovery housing for Rhode Islanders struggling with the disease of addiction.

We are strong.

We are resilient.

We are compassionate.

And we simply cannot afford to let up.

Dignity of Work

And we still have a lot of work to do to ensure that every Rhode Islander has a chance for dignified work at a decent wage.

When I was a kid, most people earned a high school diploma and went right to work. There was a pretty simple deal back then: Finish high school. Work hard. And get a decent job to support your family. You could buy a house, take a modest vacation – maybe to one of our beaches in South County or on Block Island.

There was dignity in work. There was pride in what you built and what you made.

For too many though, that deal is now out of reach.

So let's invest in our middle class. Let's put that deal back on the table here in Rhode Island.

Minimum Wage

In 2015 we raised the minimum wage.⁴¹ Last year, I stood with many of you to try raise it again.⁴² And we fell short. I think we missed an opportunity – especially as workers in Connecticut⁴³ and Massachusetts⁴⁴ got a raise on January 1st.

Our commitment to working Rhode Islanders has never been stronger. And I will stand up again this year – for the third straight year – for better wages. The budget I'll submit will once again raise the minimum wage. This time to \$10.50 an hour.

No one working full time should live in poverty.

Health Care Worker Raise

⁴⁰ The Governor's FY17 budget, which was approved by the General Assembly, included \$3.5 million in new funding to address the overdose epidemic. Additionally, her [Overdose Prevention and Treatment Action Plan](#) has been recognized by the National Governor's Association as a [model](#) for other states.

⁴¹ When Governor Raimondo took office, the minimum wage was \$9. She included a proposal, which was approved by the General Assembly, to raise the wage to \$9.60 in the FY16 budget.

⁴² Governor Raimondo submitted a proposal in her FY17 budget to raise the wage to \$10.10.

⁴³ Connecticut raised its minimum wage, effective January 1, to \$10.10.

⁴⁴ Massachusetts raised its minimum wage, effective January 1, to \$11. Vermont's minimum wage is currently \$10. Maine and New Hampshire both have a minimum wage of \$7.50.

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The budget I will submit also includes a raise for homecare workers and the people who care for Rhode Islanders with developmental disabilities. These workers ensure that the people we love live their lives with dignity. We should make sure that we value their work.

Last year, thanks to Senate President Paiva-Weed's leadership, we gave homecare and direct care workers their first raise⁴⁵ in nearly a decade.⁴⁶ And I propose that we give them another raise this year. It will make us more competitive with Massachusetts and help us make sure we have the highest quality people taking care of our Rhode Island families.

Earned Sick Leave

And while we're raising wages, let's also make sure people have a fair shot by allowing them a day off if they're sick or their kid's sick. It's time to give every Rhode Islander an opportunity to earn paid leave if they're sick or if they need to care for a sick child or parent.

Our neighbors across most of New England⁴⁷ and in states across the country – states run by Democrats and Republicans⁴⁸ – have passed or introduced modern, common-sense paid sick leave laws. Let's do the same thing here in Rhode Island.

Manufacturing

Rhode Island has always been known for making things. We used to be the jewelry capital of the world. Everyone had a story, including my own family: My father worked at Bulova Watch Factory for 28 years.

Not long ago, 40 percent of jobs here were in manufacturing.⁴⁹ And they were good jobs.

But over the years, many of those jobs were automated. Others – like my dad's – were shipped overseas. Factories closed, and the rug was pulled out from under us.

For too many years, our state's leaders – in government and business – missed an opportunity to rebuild Rhode Island's manufacturing industry.⁵⁰ They sat back on a simple hope that jobs like my dad's would come back; that the factories would miraculously reopen.

While the jobs may have left, and many of the factories have closed – Rhode Islanders' grit and determination and desire to work is stronger than ever, and we need to tap into it. Let's rebuild and reinvent the manufacturing industry in Rhode Island. Rhode Islanders are counting on us.

The budget I propose will include funding for a new manufacturing plan: First, we're going to invest in manufacturing initiatives for our high school students.⁵¹ Second, we're going to help smaller manufacturers invest in new equipment.⁵² Third, we're going to make it easier for manufacturers to train and hire Rhode Islanders.⁵³

⁴⁵ The FY17 budget included \$4 million for homecare worker raises and \$5 million to support wage increases for direct care workers. The Governor's FY18 budget will provide an additional \$5 million (all funds) to support additional raises for homecare workers and \$6 million (all funds) for direct care workers.

⁴⁶ Prior to last year, Medicaid homecare workers' most recent wage increase was in 2008. The FY17 budget included an increase in reimbursement rates to homecare providers with a requirement that the increased reimbursement be used to support higher wages for direct care workers

⁴⁷ Massachusetts, Connecticut and Vermont all have paid sick leave laws.

⁴⁸ <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/politics/bs-md-paid-sick-leave-20161207-story.html>

⁴⁹ <http://wpri.com/2016/12/28/study-providence-area-sees-biggest-shift-away-from-manufacturing-jobs-in-us/>

⁵⁰ From 1980 to 2000, the number of Rhode Islanders working in manufacturing declined by nearly half (from 129,081 in 1980 to 72,679). From 2000 to 2015, manufacturing employment dropped from 72,679 to approximately 41,000 workers.

⁵¹ The Governor's FY18 budget will include \$4.1 million to support Davies Career and Technical High School (\$2.5 million for a manufacturing program and \$1.6 for a welding program). In addition, the Governor's FY18 budget invests \$1.2 million in P-TECH programs. Three P-TECH programs launched at the beginning of this school year (Providence, Newport and Westerly), and two are set to open in Fall 2017 (North Providence and Woonsocket).

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As often as I can, I visit and talk with manufacturers and workers all across Rhode Island. Next week, I'll bring a group together to begin work on a comprehensive plan to expand our advanced manufacturing industries and position Rhode Island for success in growing industries like offshore wind and precision manufacturing.

If we commit to this together, there's no reason we can't succeed. We're already the first and only state in America with an offshore wind farm.⁵⁴ We have New England's fastest-growing advanced industry economy.⁵⁵ And we've seen wages for manufacturing workers grow consistently over the last two years.

So together, let's commit to expanding and modernizing manufacturing so more Rhode Island families can make a living building things in Rhode Island again.

Money Back in Rhode Islanders' Pockets

In recent years, we've made a series of tough decisions to cut our spending and put Rhode Island on stronger footing. We restructured the pension system. We cut \$100 million in our health care costs, without cutting eligibility or reducing benefits.⁵⁶ Because of that hard work, we are in a position to give back to our working people.

For the first time in five years, most state retirees will get a cost of living increase.⁵⁷ We've also expanded the earned income tax credit each of the last two years. We reduced the income tax seniors pay on their social security income. Now, let's take another step.

Proposal to Cut Everyone's Car Tax by at Least 30 Percent

Let's give every Rhode Islander the car tax relief that they deserve. The budget I'll send you on Thursday will cut every Rhode Islander's car tax by at least 30 percent,^{58/59} putting more than \$50 million back in your pockets.

I agree with Speaker Mattiello that this should be a priority, and I look forward to working with the legislature on this important issue.

As we come together to begin this work, let's commit ourselves to reform that's fair, fiscally responsible, sustainable in the long run and provides relief for every Rhode Islander. We also must protect all the progress we are making: investing in our schools, job training, and economic development.

⁵² The Governor's FY18 budget will propose \$3.75 million to support a new Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit that helps small manufacturers purchase equipment that will support their work to create new product lines or increase production capacity, **and** hire new employees.

⁵³ Last year, Rhode Island was selected as one of 28 states to receive U.S. Department of Labor America's Promise Grant. The \$6 million grant will help the state expand the Real Jobs RI initiative. Governor Raimondo is proposing to use that grant, in part, to support training for manufacturing employees. Additionally, the Governor's FY18 budget includes \$550,000 to support Polaris's work to help individual manufacturers optimize their businesses with specific assistance.

⁵⁴ "I love when Rhode Island is first!" – Governor Raimondo ([PBS NewsHour report, Dec. 11](#))

⁵⁵ According to the [Brookings Institution](#), Rhode Island is adding jobs in advanced industries more quickly than any other New England state and faster than the national average. The Providence Journal's editorial page summarized the report, writing: "Brookings found the ship and boat building industry employed 4,100 people in Rhode Island last year, representing a three-year growth rate of 12 percent, roughly double what it was in the previous three-year period. And in the broad category of computer systems design, Rhode Island businesses employed 6,570 workers last year, for a three-year growth rate of 7 percent. Workers in these sectors earned an average of \$73,918 last year, according to Brookings."

⁵⁶ <http://governor.ri.gov/documents/press/ReinventingMedicaidCostCurve.pdf> – February 2016

⁵⁷ <http://content.ersri.org/who-is-eligible-to-receive-a-4-year-cola-in-2017/>

⁵⁸ Governor Raimondo's car tax proposal will require cities and towns to use fair trade-in value (70 percent of full valuation). Rhode Island drivers will see the reduction in July 2018, when cities and towns send their FY19 bills.

⁵⁹ A Rhode Islander who drives a [2010 Honda Accord \(NADA Clean Retail Value of \\$11,000\)](#) currently pays \$446 in Cranston, \$117 in Newport and \$402 in Providence. Under Governor Raimondo's proposal, a 2010 Honda Accord would be valued at \$7,700 and drivers will see a savings that range from \$140 in Cranston, \$198 in Providence and \$77 in Newport.

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There is plenty of room for compromise and I'll work with anybody. Rhode Islanders want car tax relief so let's work together to get it done.

Rhode Island's Promise

As we continue to invest in Rhode Island, we need to realize that our economy has changed in ways that are causing real challenges. How we meet those challenges will determine our future.

When I was my kids' age, most jobs in Rhode Island required nothing more than a high school degree. But, for my kids and yours, that's not the case anymore. The reality is that most jobs being created now in Rhode Island will require some degree or certificate beyond a high school diploma.⁶⁰

Our job is to ensure that there is opportunity for every Rhode Islander who is willing to work for it. Our job is to ensure that Rhode Islanders are getting the jobs businesses are creating.

Last September, I set a goal to ensure that by 2025, at least 70 percent of Rhode Island adults have some degree or credential beyond high school.⁶¹ To achieve that goal, we've taken strides to make college more accessible and more affordable. We now offer the PSAT and SAT, free of charge, in every public high school.⁶² We provide student loan relief for recent graduates who live and work in Rhode Island.⁶³

PrepareRI Dual Enrollment

Last year, nearly 4,000 students were able to take college courses for free.⁶⁴ These students earn college credits while they're still in high school, and some are able to get a full semester of college under their belt before they graduate high school.

Last spring, I met a mom from Smithfield, Catherine Rickert. She's here tonight. She pulled me aside. "Governor!" she said, "You saved my family \$50,000."

"\$50K?!?" even I was surprised. "How'd we do that?"

She said, "I have twins."

The budget I will propose expands funding for this program so more Rhode Island students can start college with a head start.

But we still have a lot of work to do. Right now, fewer than half of Rhode Islanders have a degree or credential past high school.⁶⁵ Many of those without a degree are hardworking, determined Rhode Islanders, and college just isn't for them. And that's OK. We're going to continue to invest in training and certificate programs for them.

But too many others who want a college degree, have been denied a shot at a bright future for one simple reason: They can't afford it.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ Georgetown University Center for Education and Workforce: https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/StateProjections_6.1.15_agc_v2.pdf

⁶¹ The difference between a dream and goal is a deadline. <http://www.ri.gov/press/view/28599>

⁶² [Providence Journal \(Oct. 14, 2016\)](#): Warwick student rally for free PSAT tests

⁶³ More than 200 Rhode Islanders were awarded [Wavemaker Fellowships](#), a loan reimbursement initiative for young professionals who go to college in Rhode Island, graduate with a degree in a targeted field, live here and take a job in Rhode Island in targeted industries.

⁶⁴ [Providence Journal \(Sept. 20, 2016\)](#): [High School] Students tell R.I. Gov. Raimondo they worry about cost, being able to cut it in college

⁶⁵ Lumina Foundation: https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/publications/stronger_nation/2016/rhode-island-brief-2016.pdf

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A century ago, we decided as a nation that every American had a right to free education up to 12th grade. We did that because those were the skills you needed to get a good job. But our economy has changed. And the playing field has changed. And so our promise needs to change, too. Our promise needs to change if the people of Rhode Island are going to have a real shot in the economy of the future.

Because the hardest part of college shouldn't be paying for it.

So, tonight I say that we stand together and expand our Rhode Island Promise. That we ensure every young person in our state has an opportunity to compete for the good-paying jobs that we're creating. Today, I say that we take charge of our future.

Tonight, I propose that we ensure Rhode Island is the first state in America to guarantee two free years of college for every Rhode Island student at CCRI, URI or Rhode Island College.⁶⁷ I propose that we make a promise to Rhode Islanders like Juliette Xiong, a senior at Cranston East and Vinny Florio who both just got into URI; and Sarah Diallo from Tolman in Pawtucket who just found out she got into RIC.

You can read the full plan at FreeCollegeRI.com.

Rhode Islanders aren't asking for special treatment. They're asking for a shot. They're asking for a chance to compete. They're asking us to protect the dignity of work during uncertain times.

Because of the tough choices we've made in recent years⁶⁸ and the success of our economic development efforts, we can afford to do this. In fact, we can't afford not to.

Conclusion

We're up for it. Rhode Islanders are up for it. We are counting on each other to meet this challenge. After all, that's who we are. That's what people in our state expect of us.

When we're confronted by uncertainty, we hold to our founding covenant: That there's a place here for everyone. There's a place here no matter your race, your creed, your gender, where you're from or who you love.⁶⁹ So, let's come together as a community. Let's dig deep to find the hope and the resilience and the faith and the love that's going to allow us to keep making Rhode Island stronger.

It's on us. It's on all of us. We're counting on each other. And I'm standing with you.

⁶⁶ The latest RIDE survey of high school seniors found that roughly 90 percent of students *want* to attend college after graduating, but less than 65 percent actually do. The number one reason students cite for not going to college is affordability.

<http://www.rikidscount.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Factbook%202015/2015Factbook-NoArt.pdf>

⁶⁷ Governor Raimondo's proposal will guarantee that every student who qualifies for in-state tuition and enrolls full-time, right after high school will be able to earn two years of free college. Students can either earn an associate's degree at CCRI for free or enroll at URI or RIC and get free tuition their junior and senior year. The Governor will include \$10 million in the FY18 budget to start the Rhode Island's Promise expansion. \$3 million will go toward scholarships for the first class of students in the program at CCRI; \$6 million will be evenly split between the state's public colleges and universities for readiness grants; and \$1 million will be invested to help implement the program, provide assistance to students to complete the FAFSA and support communications and public education campaigns to raise awareness.

⁶⁸ Combined, pension reform and the Reinventing Medicaid initiatives achieve over \$250 million in annual savings compared to what projected expenditures would be without reform, which allow Rhode Island to invest in priorities like free college for all.

⁶⁹ In December, Governor Raimondo spoke at a vigil for victims of gun violence at the First Unitarian Church of Providence. In her remarks, she said, "Don't move to Canada. Move to Rhode Island. ... Tonight's an opportunity to remember that hate and intolerance and violence have never been a part of what makes the state strong," said the governor, "The results of the recent election isn't going to erode our core beliefs. It's not going to weaken our commitment to our core beliefs. For me personally, it provides a greater sense of urgency for the work that I do and for the values that we hold dear, to protect them even more because we realize we need to." See the full video of her remarks [here](#).

Governor Gina M. Raimondo
2017 State of the State Address
~as prepared for delivery~

Together, we'll give everyone a shot. Together, we'll strengthen our state. Together, we'll meet the challenges and build a better future for every Rhode Islander.

Together, we determine our future.

Thank you very much. God bless you. And God bless Rhode Island.

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