

OPERATION CLEAN GOVERNMENT

N E W S L E T T E R

Separation of Powers Revolution Governor Carcieri Launches Legislation for Amendment to RI Constitution

**Can 230 words change
340 years of RI history?¹**

By Will Barbeau

Newly-elected Governor Don Carcieri has taken over leadership of the citizens' revolution to change the State Constitution



Governor Don Carcieri

and establish true separation of powers. In his inaugural address—and again at a state house rally held two days later—he called it “the foundation” of his new administration.

The goal is to pass a separation of powers amendment in the 2003 legislative session. The proposed amendment was discussed by the Governor and other key speakers at a State House rally January 9th, supported by an enthusiastic coalition of more than a dozen citizens' organizations, legislators and press.

The 230-word draft amendment (see page 2) is a bipartisan and bicameral effort to create a state government in which the legislative, executive and judicial branches will be separate and co-equal.

If passed, the amendment will be placed on the ballot in 2004 for voter approval. According to Senator Mary Parella of Bristol, “It should pass the Senate. The big battle will be in the House.”

Rhode Island's government should experience historic overhaul with the constitutional change. A tradition of government dating back to a Charter from King Charles of England will finally be ended. After 340 years of domination by an all-powerful legislature, Rhode Island will have three co-equal branches of government. The state will then be governed the same way as the Federal Government and the 49 other

states. The ‘separation of powers’ principle—a high priority of the nation's founding fathers—will have finally reached Rhode Island. As Providence Journal editorialist Ed Achorn recently wrote, the state will have made a leap from the 17th to the 18th century.

John Dorr launched a citizens' war with guns 160 years ago² for the same reasons—with limited results that cost him his life. This latest citizen uprising—now led by the new Governor—hopes to finish the job with as few as 230 new words for the State Constitution. No guns this time, but plenty of citizen determination.

Hopefully, these long-sought changes will eliminate or reduce the corruption and mismanagement for which Little Rhody has long been famous. Even in Colonial times it was often called “Rogue Island.”

What makes this a ‘citizens' revolution’ is the fact that citizens in the last two elections voted strongly in favor of a Separation of Powers amendment. (2000: 66%; 2002: 76%) Most importantly the campaign is driven by what may be the largest coalition of citizens' organizations ever assembled in the state. (See list of members on page 2.)

The proposed draft amendment discussed by the Governor January 9th was written by a group including former Attorney General Sheldon Whitehouse, attorneys for Governor Don Carcieri, Senate Minority Leader Dennis Algiere, Senators Mike Lenihan and Mary Parella, Representative Nick Gorham, Roger Williams Professor Carl Bogus and Phil West of Common Cause RI. West pointed out that: “all of the key elements have been clearly established in U.S. Supreme Court precedent.”

Supporters emphasize that the battle has just begun. As Representative Nicholas Gorham put it at a recent meeting: “We are asking the leadership for the hardest thing for human nature to do, give up power.”

Background

Sheldon Whitehouse first raised the ‘separation of powers’ issue 10 years ago, a year after Governor Bruce Sundlun took office. The idea was quickly shelved, Whitehouse explained, when legislators viewed it as a declaration of war at a critical time when the state faced a major banking crisis. The issue was kept alive through the nineties by a ‘Separation of Powers Task Force’ chaired by Attorney Robert Kilmarx of Barrington. Hosted by Common Cause RI,

the Task Force worked through the years with Operation Clean Government and other citizens' reform groups.

As a former member of the SOP Task Force, this writer clearly recalls that its mission was education. Members first had to learn why ‘separation of powers’ was so important, then find ways to teach this basic concept to others. Peter Hufstader, Research Director of Common Cause, launched major supportive research projects. One, called the “50 States Project,” proved the national acceptance of the basic SOP principle, and demonstrated how oddly Rhode Island differed from other states. Another research project revealed which Rhode Island legislators participated in boards and commissions with executive powers—then catalogued a litany of scandals in these commissions spanning decades. Hufstader found that the legislature now controls 242 seats on 73 boards and commissions which have executive powers.

With these clarifying perspectives and evidence produced by the SOP Task Force, more citizens groups—as well as legislators and editorialists—came to appreciate and support the Separation of Powers concept. A tide of support for change has since been rising steadily in the Ocean State.

When funds were needed to further educate voters at election time, a new group called the ‘RI Separation of Powers Committee’ was organized under the Chairmanship of Hasbro's Alan Hassenfeld. The money it

raised was used for advertising and public relations programs that further spread the word.

The results? Legislators now repeatedly express amazement at the degree to which Rhode Island voters now appreciate—and support—the ‘separation of powers’ concept. It has truly become a ‘citizens' revolution’—now led by the state's new Governor.

With so much effort having been expended in the past eight years, this writer's eyes watered up during Governor Carcieri's inaugural address when he declared that the separation of powers amendment was the “foundation” of his new administration.

At a recent coalition meeting, Professor Carl Bogus stated, “American Democracy rests on two pillars: the vote and the division of power. A very large battle over this is coming. We will need every tool of political action during coming months: letters, editorials, calls to talk show radio, calls to friends, as well as more money to keep the public informed. There will always be border skirmishes between the three branches of government and questions to be answered as there continue to be for such basic principles as freedom of speech and freedom of religion. We must therefore hold fast to basic the principle of separation of power without compromise. There is no compromise on that principle—either you have it or you don't.”

¹ The all-powerful legislature dates to King Charles' Charter of 1663

² The Dorr Rebellion of 1842



January 9th Press Conference in the State Room at the State House

Proposed Constitutional Amendment for Separation of Powers

New Sections are Underlined:

(1) ADD language that bans dual office holding to Article III/Section 6:

No senator or representative shall, during the time for which he or she was elected, be appointed to any state office, board, commission or other state or quasi-public entity exercising executive power under the laws of this state, and no person holding any executive office or serving as a member of any board, commission or other state or quasi-public entity exercising executive power under the laws of this state shall be a member of the senate or the house of representatives during his or her continuance in such office.

(2) Define the three branches already mentioned in Article V as separate and co-equal:

The powers of the government shall be distributed into three separate and co-equal departments: the legislative, executive and judicial.

(3) DELETE Article IX/Section 5, the current appointments process:

~~{Authority to fill vacancies. — The governor may fill vacancies in office not otherwise provided for by this Constitution or by law, until the same shall be filled by the general assembly, or by the people.}~~

Instead, add language to place authority to appoint squarely in the hands of the governor, other four general officers, the judiciary, and the heads of departments by ADDING an appointments clause:

Powers of Appointment. The governor shall, by and with the advice and consent of the senate, appoint all officers of the state whose appointment is not herein otherwise provided for, and all members of any board, commission or other state or quasi-public entity which exercises executive power under the laws of this state; but the general assembly may by law vest the appointment of such inferior officers, as they deem proper, in the governor, or within their respective departments in the other general officers, the judiciary, or in the heads of departments. The governor shall have power to fill up all vacancies that may happen during the recess of the senate, by granting commissions which shall expire at the end of their next session.

(4) DELETE Article VI/Section 10 entirely.

~~{Section 10. Continuation of previous powers. — The general assembly shall continue to exercise the powers it has heretofore exercised, unless prohibited in this Constitution.}~~

Groups Supporting Separation of Powers

American Association of University Women
Coalition for Consumer Justice
Common Cause
Environment Council/RI
Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce
Hispanic-American Chamber of Commerce
Kay Coalition Against Casino Gambling
League of Women Voters/RI
Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce
Operation Clean Government
RI Separation of Powers Committee
RI State Council of Churches
Save the Bay
Sierra Club/RI



Photo by Leo Mathieu

Newly elected OCG Directors (l. to r.): David C. Clarke, Barbara Ball, Hal Meyer. Will Touret, not shown.

A War on Two Fronts

OCG Attorneys Continue to Fight the Rhode Island Ethics Commission in Both State and Federal Court

By Lee Blais, Esq.

Operation Clean Government and two of its officers continue their contest against the Rhode Island Ethics Commission in two lawsuits they have brought against that body and its current members. The lawsuits primarily seek to have the so-called "Roney Amendment" to Rhode Island's ethics legislation declared unconstitutional, in addition to suing for fees, costs and damages against the commission and its members.

Although both lawsuits stem from a nefarious attempt by the Ethics Commission to sanction OCG and several of its board members for filing a complaint against two state officials, the two lawsuits are grounded in separate and distinct legal theories.

The federal lawsuit asks the court to declare portions of the state ethics law, which authorize the Ethics Commission to sanction citizen complainants, to be declared unconstitutional and requests damages against individual commission members for violating civil rights laws.

The state lawsuit is grounded in Rhode Island's anti-SLAPP statute which authorizes penalties against persons and entities that abuse the legal system to interfere with a citizen's right to speak out on important public issues.

OCG Chair Robert Arruda and OCG Vice-Chair Beverly Clay are Plaintiffs in the state case, while Operation Clean Government, Inc. is the plaintiff in the federal matter.

In the state case, David C. Clarke and Lee Blais represent the Plaintiffs. Attorneys Sara Quinn and Lee Blais represent OCG in the federal case.

The members of the Ethics Commission are named as defendants in their official and personal capacities in both cases.

The federal case is now in its "discovery" phase in which the parties exchange information in their possession. This phase will probably close in the spring and could go to trial in federal district court next summer. Lawyers for the Ethics Commission and its members recently attempted to block discovery. However, Judge Ronald Lageux denied that request.

Recently, the Defendants filed a motion to dismiss the state lawsuit in Rhode Island Superior Court. The Plaintiffs, of course, are resisting that effort. No hearing has yet been scheduled.

The lawsuits were filed after several members of the OCG Board spent the summer defending themselves from an attempt to levy penalties of up to \$60,000 against them and the organization itself. The request to impose those penalties was withdrawn after a panel of lawyers representing OCG and its officers filed more than twenty motions before the Ethics Commission.

Even while the Ethics Commission was abandoning its sanction crusade, the commission's members refused to clarify whether the sanctions could be reinstated. The state lawsuit originally requested that the state court enjoin the commission from undertaking the unconstitutional proceedings a second time. However, attorneys for the commission and its members agreed to a voluntary order that effectively bars future attempts to sanction OCG board members and the organization under the same complaints.

A New and Improved RIEC? Perhaps...

By Janice F. Carlson

The Rhode Island Ethics Commission expects a compliance rate of over 95% on financial disclosure forms this year. Hooray! Enforcement of this very important ethics rule has languished for several years while elected officials ignored the required form, and got away with it. The compliance rate had dropped to 62% last year. This abysmal showing has, at various times, been blamed on staffing shortages and lack of funding by the General Assembly. But, after an all-volunteer committee from OCG did the work for the Ethics Commission in 2001, things changed.

To all appearances, RIEC began taking financial disclosure statements seriously after Operation Clean Government filed 45 complaints of non-compliance in June 2001. Non-filers included State Senators, Directors of State departments, Judges, Probate Judges, one Mayor and others. Eight had never filed! All were fined \$200 after OCG's action. However, there still remain seven outstanding complaints from the forty-five filed yet to be resolved. OCG took the time and effort to ferret out those who did not file because these crucial public documents were created to serve as red flags regarding any conflict of interest by elected officials. The filer must provide information

about their jobs, financial interests, real estate holdings and investments.

This year, Kent A. Willever, the commission's executive director formed a team, titled "Operation Compliance," comprised of himself and the commission's two staff investigators, after OCG forced the issue by filing the complaints. Each non-filer has been sent follow-up letters and phone calls were made to each city and town requesting compliance in this recent effort. In November, the commission voted to fine non-compliant officials to the tune of five hundred dollars, and in December they filed twenty complaints against officials, including two former General Assembly members. In recent years, RIEC rarely, if ever, filed complaints.

Congratulations to Mr. Willever for taking the glaring issue of non-compliance on financial disclosure forms and doing something about it. Hopefully, the RIEC will propose and continue to actively support legislation aimed at reducing the required filing list of those who serve on obscure boards and commissions. Furthermore, now that RIEC has the knack of filing complaints, OCG hopes they will extend the process of investigation and complaint filing to all those elected officials who violate the Code of Ethics. A pro-active, rather than passive RIEC, should be the goal.

Legislative Proposals for 2003

By Rod Driver

If the following list of OCG's legislative proposals looks a lot like last year's (in the newsletter of February/March 2002), there's a reason. Most good bills in the General Assembly don't pass on the first try. And that's an understatement for bills to change the way government does business—which is what most OCG bills are about.

Separation of Powers

In recent months "separation of powers" or "balance of powers" has become the most talked-about issue in Rhode Island politics. The idea is to amend the Rhode Island Constitution to create three separate but equal branches of government instead of the present system with inordinate power in the hands of the General Assembly. Most legislators now claim to support balance of powers, even those who have adamantly opposed it for the past two years.

Operation Clean Government has been a major advocate for several years and is now part of a coalition of organizations supporting the required constitutional amendments. If done properly, the amended constitution would look much like those of the other 49 states and of the U.S. itself.

We and others in the coalition will remain alert for the possibility that some elected officials might try to advance a false version of "separation of powers," one which would not really reduce the present overwhelming powers of the General Assembly.

Inspector General

Dozens of federal agencies have a "watchdog" office of Inspector General. Nine states plus the District of Columbia have inspectors general, as do many municipalities. States with an inspector general have realized savings which exceed the cost of the office.

We initially drafted a bill to create the office of Inspector General in 2001. As proposed, the office of Inspector General would be an independent agency charged with preventing fraud, waste, abuse and mismanagement in the expenditure of public funds by state and local governments. The IG would supervise, coordinate and/or conduct audits; criminal, civil and administrative investigations; and inspections of oversight reviews.

The IG would be both proactive and reactive and could recommend policies to government agencies to prevent problems before they arise. We devised a system for the appointment or removal of an IG designed to keep the holder of that office as independent as possible of other political forces.

In 2001 and 2002 the bill had a House Finance Committee hearing but no vote. In the Senate it did not even get a hearing. Last year's bills were 2002-H-7157 by Rep. Michael Pisaturo and 2002-S-2296 by Sen. Catherine Graziano.

Voter Information Handbook

The bill for which we had the greatest hope in 2002 was a common-sense bill to revise the procedure for providing information for voters on ballot-referenda questions. It was initially introduced in 2001.

When a bond issue or other referendum question goes on the ballot, the Secretary of State's office prepares and mails to all Rhode Island households a handbook containing the text and a description of each ballot question. However, the descriptions are usually little more than sales pitches for passage of the measures. Our bill would have provided that the voter handbook give both "pro" and "con" arguments for each ballot question as is done in several other states.

Rhode Island's one-sided presentations were particularly problematic in the 2000 general election, when voters were asked to approve two innocuous-looking bond issues which actually concealed much bigger agendas. Question 2 asked for approval of a \$60 million bond for clean water and Question 3 sought approval of a \$62.5 million bond for highway work. The voter handbook did not reveal that these two bonds would be for just the start-up phases of two of the biggest construction projects ever in Rhode Island—a \$550-million underground storm-water-holding tunnel in Providence and the relocation of I 195.

Operation Clean Government took no position on the merits of these issues. We argued simply that Rhode Islanders ought to know the implication of the questions before voting on them.

In 2001 Secretary-of-State Edward Inman also introduced a bill to accomplish this objective. We worked with Inman's staff and the League of Women Voters to resolve questions raised in the Senate Judiciary Committee. Our bill was revised and merged with Inman's, but it still did not come out of committee in the 2001 session.

In 2002 it was re-introduced in both the House and Senate "at the request of the Secretary of State" (2002-H 7380 by Rep. Steven Smith and as 2002-S-2602 by Sen. Kevin Breene). Rep. Smith's bill actually passed the House. But then both bills died in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Term Limits for General Assembly Leaders

General Assembly leaders wield enormous power over the flow of all legislation because of a certain self-enforcing unwritten rule. Members of the House and Senate quickly learn that bills rarely even come out of committee, let alone pass the House or Senate, without approval from the leaders. So to enhance prospects for their own legislative agendas most members just do what the leaders expect of them. They vote in committees and on the floor of their chambers for those bills approved by the leaders. And they let die in committee those bills which do not have leadership approval. This, of course, further confirms the power of the leaders.

Holding this power attracts large contributions to the leaders' campaign funds and makes them almost immune from challenge at the polls. Thus, they can hold onto their power for a decade or more. To interrupt this stranglehold on power, in 2002 OCG proposed a constitutional amendment to limit the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate each to four consecutive years in these leadership positions. This constitutional amendment, if enacted, was not to take effect until 2009 so it should not impact the current leadership. But we couldn't find a sponsor for the bill.

Recently others, including newly-elected Speaker William Murphy, have voiced support for term limits for leaders. It seems that they are thinking of an 8-year limit.

The Connecticut legislature has an unwritten rule that the Speaker serves no more than 2 two-year terms. Only twice in recent times has a speaker been elected to a third term in Connecticut.

Time Limit for Governor's Decision on Bills

One technique General Assembly leaders use for controlling enactment of legislation is to limit the governor's ability to veto bills. Under the Rhode Island Constitution, the governor has just one week after receiving a bill passed by the House and Senate in which to decide whether to veto it, sign it into law or let it become law without his or her signature.

In 2001, legislative leaders, once again, took advantage of this time limit. They delayed passage or simply held back hundreds of bills until the last two days of the session. Then they transmitted these bills to the governor on July 5—giving his staff just one week to analyze 400 bills. As a result, most of the bills became law without the governor's signature.

There seems to be no way to require legislative leaders to send bills to the governor in a timely manner. So instead OCG proposed amending the constitution to give the governor four weeks, instead of one, to make decisions on bills. Our bill (2002-H-7382 introduced by Rep. Frank Montanaro) was "heard" in the House Special Legislation Committee, and it died there. Senator Marc Cote will sponsor the bill in the Senate this year.

Campaign Finance

The campaign-finance reform bill of 1992 established a system for giving public "matching funds" to those candidates for general office who agree to abide by certain fund-raising restrictions. In most cases private contributions are actually more than "matched." For the first \$500 of a private contribution to a qualified candidate for general office, the public-fund "match" is \$1000.

The law prescribed matching funds in response to private contributions "from a single source." But the Board of Elections gave this an unexpected interpretation. It decided that contributions from PACs (Political Action Committees) would also qualify for "matching." So here's what's been happening. If a PAC gives \$500 to a qualified candidate for general office, the taxpayers have to kick in an additional \$1000. For contributions by a PAC over \$500 and up to \$2000, the taxpayers match every dollar. Since the Board of Elections adopted this unintended interpretation of the law, bills to correct it have been introduced repeatedly in the General Assembly. But they have not fared well. Many incumbents who receive PAC contributions apparently don't want to give up the extra taxpayer-financed enhancement of those contributions.

Bills introduced last year on behalf of OCG (2002-S-2474 by Sen. Donna Walsh and 2002-H-7198 by Rep. Joseph Scott) proposed changing the law to make clear that only private funds "from a single individual" would be matched. The bills were "heard" in the Senate Judiciary Committee and the House Finance Committee, respectively. Neither came out of committee.

Magistrate Selection Process

Rhode Island's magistrates have much the same authority, salaries and pensions as judges. Yet they are not subject to the same appointment procedures. Interest in and dismay at the selection process was heightened by the sudden appointment of the wife of the Speaker of the House to a magistrate position in December 2000.

Senator Donna Walsh sponsored a bill in 2001 to make the selection process for magistrates the same as the process for selecting judges. Since this was similar to what OCG had planned to propose, we supported Walsh's bill. The result was a "study commission." Subsequent to the work of that commission, Sen. Walsh introduced 2002-S-2629 to make the selection process for magistrates match the screening process for judges. The bill actually passed the Senate. But then it died in the House Judiciary Committee. Donna Walsh is no longer in the Senate, but it is expected that Sen. Teresa Paiva-Weed will re-introduce the bill in 2003.

Ethics Commission's Complaint-chilling Power

A 1998 amendment to Rhode Island's "Code of Ethics" by Sen. John Roney allows the Ethics Commission to impose a fine of \$5,000 on the person filing a complaint if the Ethics Commission itself declares that the complaint is "frivolous, unreasonable or groundless." This unusual statute has greatly reduced the number of complaints filed with the Commission. And it has been used to try to punish persons who file legitimate complaints. In particular, OCG and three of its officers—Chair Bob Arruda, Vice Chair Beverly Clay and Board Member Janice Carlson—were threatened with fines. They had filed a conflict-of-interest complaint against Director of Administration Robert Carl and Court Administrator John Barrette for participating in a meeting of the Unclassified Pay Board when that board approved salary hikes for themselves.

Thus a new addition to OCG's legislative agenda will be a bill to restore a citizen's right to complain by repealing two paragraphs in the "Code of Ethics," namely paragraphs 36-14-12(d) and 36-14-13(g).

Other Bills Supported

In 2002 we supported several other reform bills initiated by others, and we will continue to support the re-introduced versions in 2003. These include 2002-S-2213 by Sen. Lou Raptakis to extend the time for an individual to change party affiliation from 90 days before a primary election to 30 days before a primary.

We will continue to support Senator Michael Lenihan's bill to define "quasi-public corporations" and to establish a Joint Legislative Oversight and Review Commission to review all quasi-public corporations for accountability, efficiency and effectiveness.

A Strong Pro-Business Climate Means A Better Rhode Island for Us All

By Dale T. Read

What might it mean for all of us—rich and poor, powerful or weak, giving or receiving—if Rhode Island were to be perceived as a business-friendly, entrepreneurism-friendly (read job creation-friendly) state, rather than the corrupt, abysmal business-unfriendly state Rhode Island so often turns out to be? Let's look at what it would mean if we became a "go-to" destination for entrepreneurs and business executives.

Suppose our government, our tax policy and our regulatory structure actually encouraged new bio-technology, medical technology, high technology, industrial design, product development and other real wealth producing businesses as well as the arts, finance and other services? Imagine the jobs! Imagine the growth! Imagine the tax revenues to finance social services, education and of course job and career training! But it all starts, not with the government, but with profit-seeking, wealth producing businesses that will employ Rhode Islanders.

Often pro-big government advocates imply that tax revenues rightfully belong to the public sector first, and that tax breaks for business development are public money being doled out to private companies. The fact that these companies and their employees generate this money in the first place is completely lost. A more accurate view is that revenues only belong to state government when they are raised in accordance with a fair and reasonable tax policy designed to achieve economic, social and governmental objectives.

One of those objectives may very well be to build a strong business and employment base by creating a more favorable business climate whereby private companies and their employees keep more of the money they have earned in the first place. The downside for some is that the money doesn't get into the hands of the public sector bureaucracies and unions and isn't fed to the insatiably growing state government beast.

Lest I be accused of exaggerating per-

mit me to ask this question? How many average taxpayers in Rhode Island had their income grow by 41 percent in the four years from fiscal 1997 to 2001? An October 28 news report in the *Providence Journal* stated, "Rhode Island's general revenue spending climbed 41 percent in just four years—from \$1.76 billion in 1997 to \$2.48 billion in 2001—according to data provided by RIPEC." This mad-cap spending occurred despite the fact that inflation has been below 2% a year for many years.

The reason for this spending is the dominance of one political party, the old-boy network that has controlled that party and a constitutionally weak governor. The General Assembly has simply spent too much, too fast and expected businesses and individuals to pay the bills. When I see this, I do not feel badly when I call the state government a beast with a huge appetite for tax dollars. Many households have to hold down two or even three jobs just to get by.

A broader examination of Rhode Island shows that we are a "client state" as opposed to a "producer state." We have a very high level of public employees, retired public employees, retired and disabled recipients of benefits, legal and illegal immigrants, single parent families with children in poverty, unskilled workers, etc.

Many of our more skilled and intelligent children go elsewhere for their education and never come back. This is unfortunate because we have some of the best colleges and universities in the world, but few job opportunities. Clearly, to really begin to solve our problems we have to come up with new solutions. The pro-big government forces and the pro-business forces must work together.

There are plenty of studies, which show that heavy tax burdens have a detrimental effect upon new and expanding businesses. Early in the Almond Administration, a well-documented research report from the Cato Institute in Washington, DC clearly showed that Rhode Island bears one of the highest overall tax burdens of any state in the US.

This discourages entrepreneurs and business executives from locating here.

The Small Business Survival Committee, recently reported that Rhode Island's congressional delegation ranked 47th out of 50 states when voting on critical tax and regulation issues that effect small business. This message goes far in telling small business to stay away.

All the job and career training in the world will not bring smart, perceptive business people to a place that believes the more money spent in the public sector the better.

Education, job creation, social welfare, and social justice issues represent great challenges for Rhode Island. In order for us to solve these issues we have to honestly face these problems and figure new ways to create job opportunities. Part of that creativity is accepting that small and midsize businesses bring jobs; that entrepreneurs and employers are driven by profit; and that the best paying jobs do not come from the retail sector, the tourist industry, the entertainment industry, or even our various service industries.

The truth is that jobs in entrepreneurial design, technology, manufacturing and production of software and hard goods products pay the best salaries and benefits. An overall increase in new small and midsize core businesses will result in numerous support services from retail to healthcare, restaurants to resorts, theaters to art galleries, insurance to marketing services, communication to transportation and real estate to banking.

But it all starts with a spirit of business growth. Yes, training of our work force is

vital. But I can assure you that if Rhode Island became more business friendly due to enlightened tax and regulation policy, along with the streamlining of government services for business; then those businesses would demand skilled labor and would pro-actively work with our schools and government to adequately train the labor force.

They in turn would secure profits for themselves, their shareholders and their employees. As the boats rise with the tide the revenues for social welfare and training programs would increase as well.

The old big government formula simply has failed. It's time for a new formula. Turn Rhode Island into a friendly place for entrepreneurs and future small and midsize businesses, trim down state government, attack corruption and government waste, integrate state and local economic development activities, and use private and public resources for training. And finally, bring back a two-party system, pass a true "Separation of Powers", use a line-item veto, selectively cut taxes and regulation, and reduce paperwork. Then we just might begin to see the "Miracle of Rhode Island" in the years ahead.

Mr. Read is the former President of the Rhode Islanders For Tax Reform an Affiliate of the Americans For Tax Reform in Washington, DC.

Note: This opinion piece does not necessarily represent that of OCG. As with all articles in OCG's newsletter, opposing views are welcome.

For a current list of 2003 legislators including
telephone numbers, addresses and occupations, visit
www.ocgri.org

WHO WE ARE...

OPERATION CLEAN GOVERNMENT is a grassroots organization working to bring about positive changes in Rhode Island state government. We advocate the passage of legislation which will provide Honest, Responsible and Responsive state government. We file court suits and ethics complaints and alert the public to government wrongdoing via OCG newsletters, press releases, opinion pieces on editorial pages and appearances in the electronic media. Dues are \$12 for an individual membership and \$15 for a family membership. Donations of any amount are also welcome. As an all volunteer organization, there are no salaries or compensation other than the satisfaction that we are giving our best effort to make a positive difference in Rhode Island. Our costs include newsletters, mailings, court filing fees, office materials and supplies, publicity and public forums.

OCG MEMBERSHIP FORM

YES, I want to join other Rhode Island citizens and help to promote Honest, Responsible and Responsive State Government.

New member Renewal

My membership contribution to OPERATION CLEAN GOVERNMENT is enclosed:

\$12 Individual \$15 Family (list all names to be included) \$25 \$50 \$100 \$____ Other

Name(s) _____ Home Phone _____

_____ Business Phone _____

Street _____ Email Address _____

City/Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

OCG is a non-profit organization, however contributions are not tax deductible because our activities include lobbying.

Yes, I would like to volunteer some time or participate on one or more of the OCG committees. Please call me.

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