

Coastal and Riverine Flood Resilience

2021 Legislative Agenda

House Bill: H 5124

Sponsored by Representatives Casimiro, Craven, Noret, Donovan, McEntee

Senate Bill: S 475

Sponsored by Senators Euer and DiMario

Legislative Explanation

[H 5124](#) and [S 475](#) enables cities and towns to provide a tax exemption to individuals who make structural improvements to their homes located within a flood plain to mitigate flood disasters.

Issue Background

For the last several years, Congress has failed to negotiate a permanent restructuring of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), while passing eleven short-term flood insurance extensions since 2017. The result is unpredictability for homeowners who reside and/or own homes in high-risk flood areas throughout Rhode Island, and expensive insurance premiums to safeguard properties in designated flood zones. The Rhode Island Association of REALTORS® (RIAR) asked the General Assembly to introduce H 5124 and S 475, as we believe the legislation will be a tool that protects residents from elevated sea level rise in high-risk flood areas, while providing middle-class homeowners with needed tax relief for pre-disaster mitigation.

Please let your Representatives and Senators Know:

Homeowners Need Predictability and Tax Relief

- Rhode Island's high number of active flood insurance policies underscores why proactive measures are necessary to mitigate the economic hardships caused by coastal and riverine flooding.
- [H 5124](#) and [S 475](#) could be a mechanism for reducing floods and/or offsetting insurance costs should the NFIP's authorization lapse due to political gridlock in Washington, D.C.

Cities and Towns Benefit from Proactive Solutions

- A 2019 Providence Journal article referenced estimates made by Columbia University and the First Street Foundation that Rhode Island lost \$44.7 million in real estate appreciation between 2005 and 2017.
- Cities and towns are missing opportunities to collect much-needed property tax revenue to fund infrastructure projects such as upgrading stormwater systems to better manage heavier storm flow and public buildings to decrease energy use.

Homes and Property Values Must be Preserved

- Rhode Island properties are more susceptible to flood damage and the economic hardships incurred from ignoring the signs, which will eventually impact the entire Rhode Island housing market.
- Proposals like H 5124/S 475 provide tax incentives for homeownership that could sustain property values for the long-term.