

## You Shouldn't Have to Know a Guy

### Ensuring the State House Works for All Rhode Islanders, Not Just the Insiders

One of the most consistent things I hear while talking to Rhode Islanders is something along the lines of “it just doesn’t feel like our leaders are listening to us” or “the State House isn’t focused on the things that my family and I are dealing with” or the evergreen Rhode Island cliché of “it seems like you have to know a guy.”

Session began last week, and working Rhode Islanders don’t have a highly-paid lobbyist dialing the phones, picking up the tab at politician lunches, or writing a check to get into the power player fundraisers that kick off the legislative season.

It contributes to this sense of frustration that there is a disconnect between the struggles Rhode Islanders are going through and what gets prioritized. Too often, what is fast-tracked and considered important as legislation moves through committees and votes in the General Assembly does not reflect those struggles.

Twenty-six other states have campaign finance restrictions during the legislative session including Massachusetts and Connecticut. Rhode Island should as well.

Let’s take some commonsense steps to change the perception that Rhode Island is a state where you have to pay for influence or be a well-connected insider in order to get anything done.

- Helena

#### Three Commonsense Ideas:

- **Ban All Gifts and Donations from Registered RI Lobbyists to Statewide Elected Officials, State Legislators (and candidates for both) One Week Before and During State Legislative Session**  
Twenty-six other states have restrictions on lawmakers’ ability to raise campaign funds during the legislative session. Lobbyists should be able to argue their case on the merits—not their checkbooks—especially when lawmakers are actively in session. I will proactively abide by this and not accept money from registered RI lobbyists during this time period. I’ve updated my campaign’s donation materials to require that anyone contributing to my campaign verify that they are not a registered lobbyist in RI, and I’m calling on everyone running for governor to do the same.
- **Real Time Disclosure of Lobbying Activity**  
Let’s make it easier for the public to see what lobbyists are up to. We need a database that shows every meeting or meaningful interaction a lobbyist or employee of a lobbying firm has with legislators or legislative staff members during session, along with details about the issues or bills discussed. These reports would be filed at least on a weekly basis during the legislative session, with tough penalties for non-compliance.
- **Lower All Lobbyist Reporting Thresholds to \$1 (Year Round)**  
Lobbyists shouldn’t be able to give a gift to a legislator without publicly disclosing it.