

POLICY MATTERS 2007

Rhode Island

Index of State Policy Changes in the 2007 Data Update

Key to a state's prosperity are the strength of its work force, the health of communities, and the efficiency of government investment, all of which can be enhanced by adopting policies that improve opportunities for children and families. As state leaders pursue these goals, they need strong research evidence to help assess which policies can produce results most effectively and can produce a high rate of return on their policy investments.

Policy Matters reports serve as such a guide by assembling research on effective policies in the areas most important to a family's opportunity and stability: employment, income and asset growth, health, education, and healthy family relationships. In 2006, *Policy Matters* published a report defining key state policy measures in these areas and providing data comparing the policy status of all states (and the District of Columbia). In 2007, *Policy Matters* released its first annual data update and comparison to assess changes in state policy since the publication of the first report. To track policy changes by state, a separate index has been prepared for each state and the District of Columbia. All of these documents are available at www.policymatters.us.

The *Policy Matters* 2007 Data Update reports the following changes for Rhode Island:

Policy Number in Report	Policy Change	Year Effective
1.1	Predatory mortgage lending. Rhode Island now provides significant protection beyond that provided in federal law. Previously, Rhode Island law provided no protection against predatory mortgage lending.	2006
1.2	Payday lending. Rhode Island enacted legislation that legally authorizes abusive payday lending.	2006
2.3	Income tax threshold. Rhode Island increased the threshold at which earners begin owing income tax from 151.7 percent to 153.2 percent of the federal poverty level.	2005
3.1	State Minimum Wage. Rhode Island increased its state minimum wage from \$6.75 to \$7.10 (and will increase it to \$7.40 in 2007).	2006-07
4.1	Income eligibility for subsidized child care. Rhode Island increased its eligibility level in dollar terms, but when measured as a percentage of state median income, this eligibility level decreased from 62 percent to 61 percent.	2006
9.3	Parent eligibility for Medicaid. Rhode Island increased its parental eligibility level in dollar terms, but when measured as a percentage of the federal poverty level, this eligibility level remained constant at 192 percent.	2006

Policy Number in Report	Policy Change	Year Effective
12.2	Programs to prevent and treat tobacco use. Rhode Island reduced funding for these programs from 25.3 percent to 21.2 percent (measured as a percentage of guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).	2005-06
15.2	Education funding equity. Rhode Island reduced the level of funding equity between school districts as indicated by an equity-measuring index that fell from 77 to 66.	2003
15.3	Education funding adequacy. Rhode Island reduced the percentage of local school funding provided by the state, which is a key contributor to funding adequacy, from 42 percent to 41.1 percent.	2003-04
16.1	Higher education affordability (four-year colleges/universities). Rhode Island increased average tuition for public four-year institutions from \$5,396 to \$6,343, but also increased state need-based financial aid (measured as a percentage of federal need-based aid) from 21 percent to 27 percent.	2005-06
16.2	Higher education affordability (two-year colleges/universities). Rhode Island increased average tuition for public two-year institutions from \$2,120 to \$2,470, but also increased state need-based financial aid (measured as a percentage of federal need-based aid) from 21 percent to 27 percent.	2005-06

The full *Policy Matters* report can be downloaded at www.policymatters.us



Our mission is to develop and promote public policies and practices that support and strengthen families and help communities produce equal opportunities and better futures for children. For more information on the work of the Center for the Study of Social Policy, visit our website at www.cssp.org or call (202) 371-1565.