



August 24, 2014

Dear Fellow East Siders:

This week's letter discusses a possible Constitutional convention, the City's textile recycling program and a public forum this week to hear candidates for local office.

This past Tuesday (August 19) a group called RenewRI announced its campaign to educate voters about a Constitutional convention and advocate for passage of Ballot Question 3, which would authorize such a convention to take place. You can learn about RenewRI by visiting their website, www.RenewRI.org, which includes [background information](#) and answers to [frequently asked questions](#). The most recent convention in 1986 produced the current Ethics Commission, which provided the standards and the authority to investigate and successfully prosecute former Governor DiPrete. There are many other areas in which our current Constitution could benefit from review and reform, including the fact that Rhode Island's Constitution lacks a judicially enforceable right to education, placing us out of the mainstream both in terms of civil rights and education reform. As the [FAQ](#) section describes, some members of the civil rights community fear that a Convention will compromise cherished rights; however, there are several checks to prevent that from happening, including the requirement that the voters approve any proposed changes (which successfully blocked a proposed curtailment of a woman's right to choose in 1986), and the Bill of Rights under the United States Constitution, which provides an impregnable bulwark against state-level constitutional encroachments. (On the other hand, the federal Constitution does not protect the right to education, while most other state constitutions do.) The positive changes we can enact through Constitutional reform could outlast any of the other issues or candidates on November's ballot. Please [send me a message](#) if you would like to discuss this further.

The City entered into a partnership with Goodwill Industries to encourage residents to donate used clothing to needy residents. This program accomplishes several goals, including (1) helping the less fortunate, (2) recycling textiles, (3) saving space at the Central Landfill and recycling fees for the City and (4) generating City revenues from a non-tax source. The City has placed a number of collection containers on City property to support this effort, and one located at the base of Blackstone Boulevard (near the Lincoln School) generated the largest volume of donated clothing. On the other hand, residents objected to the aesthetic impact of the container, to the point that some of them began to collect signatures for a planned petition to the Mayor offering him a possible chance to "regain" their vote if (and only if) he ensured the relocation of the collection box. (To my knowledge, the petition never reached the Mayor's desk.) While I was not involved with the original choice of location, after hearing the concerns of residents who contacted me directly, I worked with the Office of Sustainability, to address these concerns. The City will move the container to another City location on Monday. The next closest container is located in the Hope High School parking lot, and I encourage all East Siders to recycle your clothing there to benefit our community, our environment and our City.

On **Wednesday, August 27, at 7:00 p.m. at Books on the Square**, the Wayland Square Discussion Group will sponsor a public discussion with the Democratic Party candidates for (a) City Council, Ward One (Malcolm Reis and Councilman Seth Yurdin), (b) Rhode Island House, District 3 (Representative Edith Ajello and Nathanael Hannah) and (c) Rhode Island Senate, District 3 (Senator Gayle Goldin and Chris Wall). This setting provides us all with the chance to meet and interact with these candidates, allowing for the kind of constructive and productive public engagement that can help elected officials be responsive to and accountable for citizen concerns.

Sincerely,